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VARSITY

Men lead women by 8% in receipt of Firsts

Maia Wyn Davies
Co-Editor
Charlotte Lillywhite
Deputy Editor

33.0% of all men who sat undergraduate examinations in the 2018/19 academic year received a first, compared to just 24.7% of all women, according to a *Varsity* Freedom of Information request. Conversely, around 58.1% of women were awarded a 2.i, compared to 47.9% of men.

82.6% of women attained at least a 2.i, and 80.9% of men.

Since records began in 2011, male undergraduates at Cambridge have been more likely to receive a First in their examinations than women, while female undergraduates have consistently been more likely than men to receive a 2.i.



News page 2 ► ▲ This week saw new freshers matriculate across Cambridge (ANDREW HYNES)

Cambridge admits record number of Black UK undergraduates

Zac Ntim
News Correspondent

The number of Black UK undergraduate students starting at the University of Cambridge this term has risen, with a total of 91 black students admitted, increasing the overall number of Black undergraduate students to more than 200. This is an all-time high.

As a result, for the first time in the University's history, the proportion of Black students has risen above 3% (3.4%).

Senior Pro-Vice-Chancellor for Education, Professor Graham Virgo, said: "This record rise in the number of black students is a credit to their hard work and ability: we have not lowered entry standards."

Cambridge University has been extensively criticised for its low admission sta-

tistics for BME groups, particularly Black students. Last year at least 20 courses at the university accepted fewer than three Black students.

Natural Sciences is the largest subject at Cambridge and in 2018, of the 430 accepted UK students on the course only three were Black. This equates to less than 0.7% of the total cohort.

Varsity also reported last year that Cambridge accepted more Etonians than

Black male students. A total of 61 Black students were admitted, 40 Black women students and 21 Black men students, whereas 22 Etonians were accepted.

A number of factors are thought to be behind the increase in Black students applying and being admitted. Professor Virgo praised the hard work by admissions staff across the University and colleges who have run various outreach campaigns and activities.

One huge change has been the "Stormzy effect." In August 2018, the award-winning British grime artist announced the Stormzy Scholarship, which funds both the tuition fees and living costs for two Black undergraduate students each year for the duration of their study at Cambridge.

Since then the University has seen an

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EDITORIAL

The fantasy of Cambridge

Cambridge has an illustrious history. Cycling down King's Parade for the first time – or even, for finalists, for the hundredth – it can be difficult to properly comprehend how you may even fit into this city and its storied past, let alone make your mark here.

It can also feel quite daunting, almost as though the weight of Cambridge's history sits uncomfortably on your shoulders. Cambridge has been the home of a long list of trailblazers and groundbreakers, it's true, but it has also been – and continues to be – the site of a whole host of archaic practices. It is, in some ways, a gatekeeper of anachronistic traditions, traditions which can sometimes serve to impede progress, which should in fact be contrary to the University's founding principles as a site of education and development.

Faced with this history, and Cambridge's evergreen presence in the popular imagination, the University can initially seem almost untouchable, even after you've donned your gown for the first time. But a long legacy does not equate to a perfect legacy, nor should you feel compelled to conceive it as such, even sometimes in the face of your own personal experiences here. If a University truly is a site of education, it must by definition also be a site of change. Across Cambridge, among students, academics and staff, new imaginings of what Cambridge could – and should – be are constantly developing. These are not threats to the University's status. Rather, they are further opportunities to improve, and build upon the work of those that have gone before us.

Don't be afraid to reject the fantasy of Cambridge. It can feel daunting to challenge internal systems as mighty and historic as the structures supporting King's Chapel. But the goal should not be to acquiesce, to tolerate structures which let you, and those that will come after you, down. Cambridge is changing – as it should – but there is always more to be done.

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News

Cambridge's gender attainment gap

Since records began, men more likely to achieve a First

A Varsity investigation has found that from 2010 to 2019, men were consistently more likely to receive a First in exams

► Continued from front page

In the last 9 years, the male lead in the proportional receipt of Firsts has dropped by around 1.4 percentage points, from 9.7% to 8.3%. The greater likelihood that women receive a 2.i has dropped by less than a percentage point.

Last year, as in the 7 years prior, a smaller overall difference in attainment existed in the lower pass grades: 11.1% of men and 9.6% of women received a 2.ii, and 2.4% of men and 1.5% of women received a third.

A higher proportion of men achieved a First in at least 22 out of 37 subject areas, while a higher proportion of women received a First in at least 4. Varsity was unable to calculate the attainment gap for students receiving Firsts in the remaining 7 subjects, for which the University gave 'fewer than five' as a figure to avoid the risk of identifying students.

In the majority of subject areas, where a higher proportion of men achieved a First, a higher proportion of women achieved a 2.i. However, in Maths, Computer Science, Economics, and Philosophy a higher proportion of men achieved both Firsts and 2.is than women.

Proportionally, more men than women achieved Firsts in at least 14 arts and humanities subjects out of a possible 24, and 8 STEM subjects out of a possible 9.

Responding to the findings, a spokesperson for the University pointed to Cambridge's Access and Participation Plan, approved by the OfS early

last month, where "there is a specific commitment to closing all attainment gaps".

CUSU Women's Officer Kate Litman told Varsity that "the burden of responsibility to reform teaching and assessment methods and end the disparity of women's experiences at Cambridge lies with the University and individual faculties."

Faculties must "confront their gender attainment gaps and demonstrate that they are willing to deploy creative solutions and rethink what a degree at Cambridge has to look like," Litman

33%

Percentage of men who got a First in 2018/19

24.7%

Percentage of women who got a First in 2018/19

noted.

In at least 14 subject areas last year, the proportion of men who received a First was at least 10 percentage points higher than it was for women.

The biggest attainment gap was in Asian and Middle Eastern Studies (AMES) examinations, whose cohort was 61% female, where the proportion of men

who received a First was 30.7 percentage points higher than the proportion of women who received the same.

This was closely followed by Archaeology, with a 70% female cohort, where men led women by 27.3 percentage points in getting a First.

Of these 14 subjects where men had a significant lead on women, 4 were STEM subjects and the other 9 were arts and humanities subjects.

The biggest lead women had on men in achieving a First was in Architecture, where the percentage points' difference was 8.8. Following this, the biggest lead female students had on their male counterparts was in Land Economy, with a percentage point difference of 2.4.

Meanwhile, a higher proportion of women achieved a 2.i in at least 26 subject areas last year.

The biggest lead women had on men in receiving 2.is was in History of Art, where the percentage point difference was 27.0. The widest attainment gap was seen, therefore, within AMES, where men had a 30.7 percentage point lead on





the proportional receipt of Firsts.

This difference in attainment existed only in the top two grades: 11.1% of men and 9.6% of women received a 2.ii, and 2.4% of men and 1.5% of women received a third. This has been the case since 2011, according to the University’s annual report on the undergraduate examination results of UK domiciled students.

The attainment gap within the top grade has closed only slightly in almost a decade. In 2011, the proportion of men who received Firsts was some 9.7 per-

30.7%

The lead in male Firsts as versus female Firsts in AMES examinations

centage points greater than the proportion of women who received them. In 2019, men remained 8.3 percentage

▲ A higher proportion of men achieved a First in at least 22 out of 37 subject areas
(ANDREW HYNES)



▲ Of these 14 subjects where men had a significant lead on women, 4 were STEM subjects and the other 9 were arts and humanities subjects (ANDREW HYNES)

points ahead.

Meanwhile, women have been more likely to receive a 2.i than men for at least the past 9 years.

The greater proportion of women receiving a 2.i has dropped by less than a percentage point in this period, from an 11-point difference in 2011 to a 10.1-point difference in 2019.

Litman told *Varsity* that “degrees which are overwhelmingly exam focussed and courses with unmanageable workloads let down many students, not just women.

“*Something needs to give*”

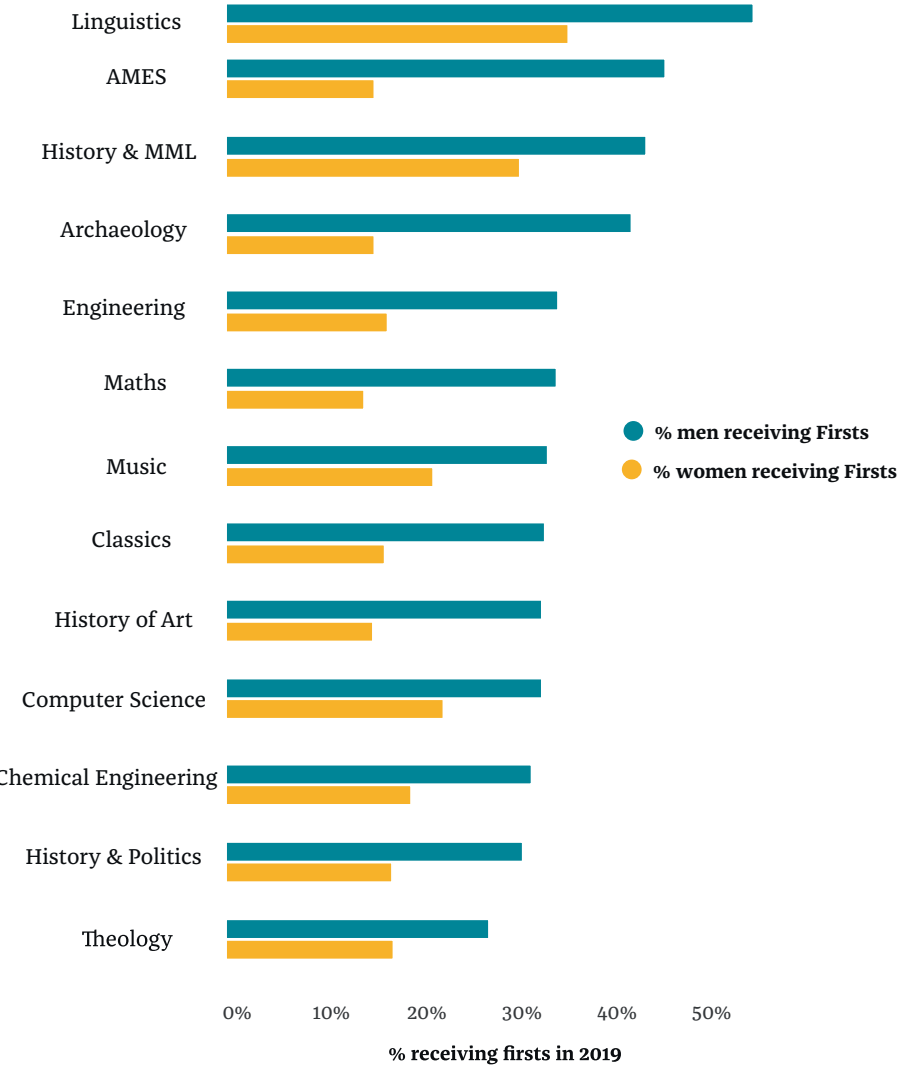
“Something needs to give, and the University must stop seeing elements of the degree structure as immovable.”

“Student academic reps are well placed to push for changes such as more diverse modes of assessment, course content which doesn’t relegate women’s contributions, and transparent reporting on gender attainment”.

“The Women’s Campaign and the Education Officer are working to produce guidance for Faculty Reps to support them in holding their faculties to account on gender attainment,” she added.

AMES worst for gender disparity among scholars

A *Varsity* investigation found that Asian & Middle Eastern Studies, Archaeology, and Maths had the largest percentage difference between men and women receiving firsts in their yearly results



► Graphic by Rosie Bradbury

NEWS

King’s warns students of ‘interloper’ passing as a new fresher

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▲ King’s College (LOUIS ASHWORTH)

NEWS

What’s the new UCU ballot, and will there be more strikes?

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FEATURES

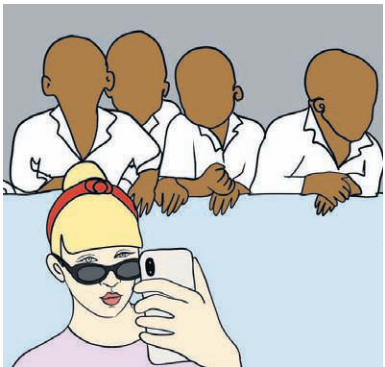
Undoing the whitewashing that kept my Pakistani heritage hidden away

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Folu Ogunyeye

Voluntourism is a damaging industry

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SCIENCE

Honouring LGBT+ voices in Cambridge’s museums

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SPORT

Athletics is no longer about the athletes

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News



Trexit on Trial

Since it was revealed that Trinity had chosen to leave the USS at a cost of £30m, academics & students have regularly protested. Most recently, protestors gathered on Tuesday as Trinity's new master arrived

(STEPHANIE STACEY
& ROSIE BRADBURY)



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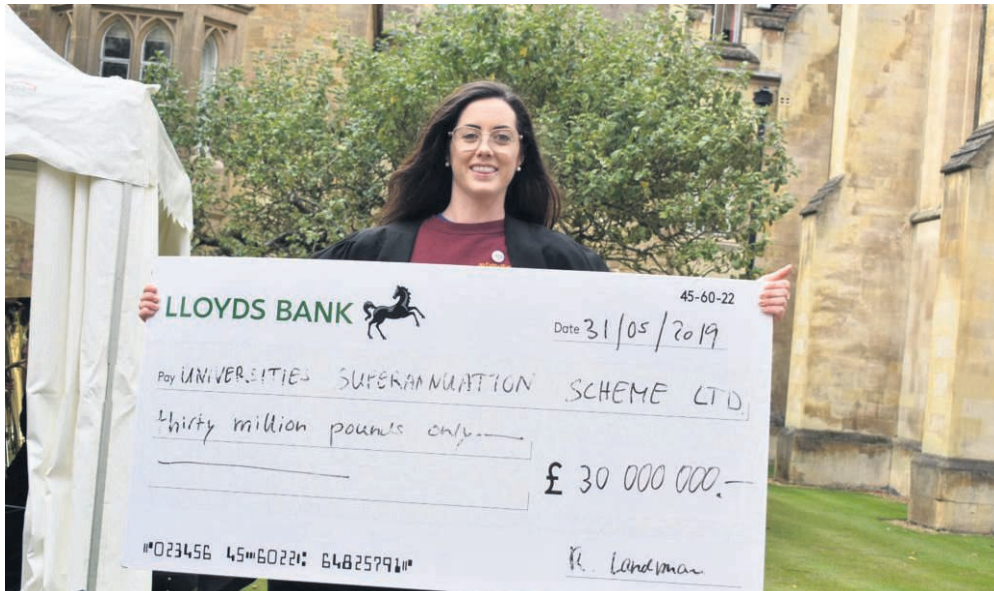
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ART NOUVEAU Fitzwilliam reopens after renovation

Fitzwilliam Museum has opened its doors to visitors after a two-year renovation which has seen comprehensive work done to the gallery interiors, including replastering, new tapestries and lighting. The completion of the renovation, whose cost has not been disclosed, is being celebrated with an exhibition of the works of 17th-century painters Anthony van Dyck and Daniel Mytens. Visitors can also expect to experience collaborative exhibitions incorporating audio-visual technology.

SPOOKY SURPRISE Ghost sighted outside Mill Road Co-op

A Cambridge Twitter user shared the report of the “unnatural apparition”, which was spotted last Friday. According to the post, the ghost was wearing a long cloak and chains, though was not sporting any shoes as it was floating. The author of the report couldn’t determine the ghost’s age or sex, but described it as “quite annoying” and its physical build as “transparent.” The matter has apparently been referred to the police.

REMEMBERING AARON Fund opened to honour fellow

The family of POLIS lecturer Dr Aaron Rapport, who passed away in June, have established an endowment at Corpus Christi to support teaching and learning at the college. The Aaron M. Rapport Fund will be used however it is most needed, “honouring and remembering Aaron and keeping his name alive in the breath and fabric of this ancient college that he loved so much”, and will last in perpetuity, ensuring that “his legacy and name will be recognized for as long as the University of Cambridge stands.”

PLASTIC-FREE POP-UP Students launch zero-waste food shop

A zero-waste store called SCOOP has been launched by a group of Cambridge students. The scheme is set to sell perishable food items without packaging to reduce plastic consumption, and will encourage students to bring their own tupperwares. SCOOP claims to be non-profit and will be volunteer-run, with pop-up shops scheduled to appear in various colleges. The store is set to launch this Saturday at Pembroke.

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News

'It should send out a signal to other Black students that they can find their place at Cambridge'

► Continued from front page

increase in the number of black students enquiring about courses and attending outreach events. The same funding was also offered to Oxford university, but the Croydon rapper claims it was rejected.

Several student societies have also been actively involved in promoting the University to groups of young people who may not have thought of, or ever been encouraged, to apply to Cambridge. Last year Cambridge launched the video campaign 'Get in Cambridge', a series of short films published in collaboration with the Cambridge African Caribbean Society (ACS), aimed specifically at year 12 students from underrepresented groups. Hosted by Cambridge graduate, business-owner and YouTuber Courtney Daniella, the series was intended to challenge misconceptions surrounding the Cambridge experience.

Wanipa Ndhlovu, President of Cambridge ACS, welcomed the new admission figures, she said: "This is really good news and is a testament to the hard work that ACS, as well as the University, has been putting in to break down perceptions.

"It should send out a signal to other

black students that they can find their place at Cambridge and succeed. I hope this will be seen as encouraging to any black student who may have been told Cambridge isn't the place for them." External programmes have also had a positive impact. Target Oxbridge, a free programme that aims to help black African and Caribbean students and students of mixed race with black African and Caribbean heritage increase their chances of getting into Oxbridge.

Through the programme, A-Level students are provided with advice and support and are given regular contact with a black or minority ethnic Oxbridge graduates to pinpoint their strengths and discuss their aspirations through one-on-one mentoring.

In September Cambridge announced that more than 68% of its students came from a state school background. The University also participated in UCAS' Adjustment scheme for the first time this year, with a total of 67 students from widening participation backgrounds offered places.

► **Matriculation in 2019** (ANDREW HYNES)



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Planned counter-terror barrier on King's Parade draws controversy

Sophie Huskisson
News Correspondent

A temporary barrier north of Bene't Street is to be put in place to minimise harm in the event of a vehicle approaching at high speed. The road could be closed for up to 18 months.

The decision comes in light of the continued national UK terror threat level of severe, as police forces across the country have offered advice to councils to increase local security. Labour councillor Richard Roberston, Executive Councillor for Finance and Resources at the city council, told the *Cambridge Independent*, "We will provide funding for a temporary barrier and associated installation and signage works, to close King's Parade during an experimental period."

"£35,000 will be allocated from the reserves and the remaining 50 per cent will be met by the Greater Cambridge Partnership." Lib Dem members of the Cambridge Joint Area Committee voted against the proposal in March, causing the scheme to be paused. They are now calling for the City Council to rethink the type of barrier used, expressing concerns that it will impact cyclists and pedestrians.

Liberal Democrat Market Ward Councillor Nichola Harrison expressed concerns that there will not be enough space for safe travel. She suggested that the City

Council should consider other designs that "would cause less disruption whilst performing the same function" such as a traffic-slowing curve in the road, known as a chicane.

Lib Dem Cllr Anthony Martinelli said that Councillors for the West Central Cambridge Area were "unanimous that this scheme was not appropriate in its current form", and that he has written to the Executive Councillor and the Chief Executive to the Council's Strategy and Resources Committee to "request reconsideration".

King's College, having been contacted by the council, said they have not been told of any decision relating to when the barrier will be put in place. They said it is as of yet unclear whether the closure will affect vehicle and delivery access to the college. The college did say that the closure should not affect students at the college or University, stating that "pedestrian and cycle access into King's Parade should be as it is now."

Although there is no specific threat to Cambridge, King's Parade attracts over eight million visitors each year. It is at the centre of the university, making it a concerning area for the police counter terrorism unit (CTU). In particular, large numbers of people gather at the Corpus Clock at the corner of the parade with Bene't Street and Trumpington Street.

“*King's Parade attracts over eight million visitors each year*”

King's warns of 'college interloper' masquerading as matriculating fresher

Sasi Valaiyapathi
News Correspondent
Inez Daltrop
Investigations Editor

Members of King's College have been warned about a male "college interloper" who "socialised with some new and existing students" during freshers events. The information was sent out to students on Monday afternoon in an email written by the Senior Tutor and Head Porter.

The college told *Varsity* that the person in question was asked to leave the college in a meeting with the Senior Tutor and Porters after they became certain he was not, in fact, a matriculating student. He was also given the opportunity to present himself at the Tutorial Office on Monday in case there had been a failure of communication, but he did not show up.

The email reassured students that this person did not present any risk, but that he simply had "no business in the College, or any of its hostels".

Tim Flack, the Senior Tutor at King's College, emphasised: "The College takes

“
[The interloper]
socialised
with some
new and
existing
students
”

the safety and security of all of its students, staff and fellows very seriously.

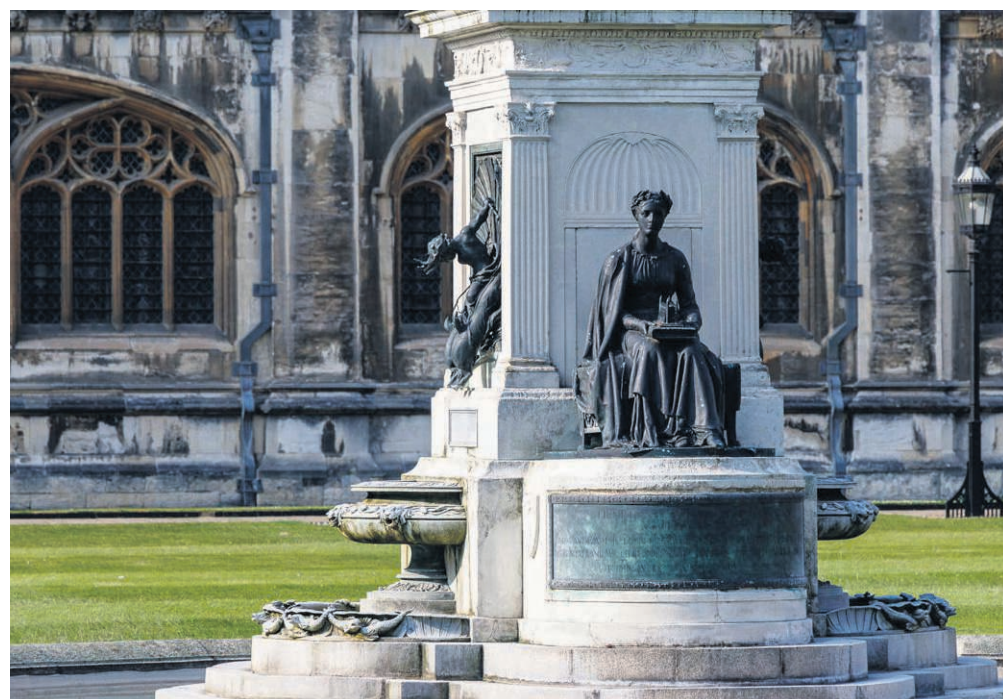
"Our priority in dealing with this interloper was always to minimise any risk to safety whilst at the same time avoiding unnecessary alarm."

Some first-year students at King's said that they had realised that this man was not a matriculating first year undergraduate after he attempted to attend certain internal events, specifically ones which registered the names of each student. Some freshers also said that he had told them that his offer to begin at the University was not until April by way of explanation for his not staying in College accommodation.

The 'interloper' was able to communicate with other freshers via the Facebook pages set up in order to welcome new students and, in fact, had created one of the fresher's group chats.

The email sent out to King's members asked students to cease communicating with him via social media and in person, and strongly advised them not to confront him, but instead to report him if he returns to College property.

Speaking about the situation, one first-year student told *Varsity*, "All it's



▲ King's contacted students to warn them of the situation on Monday (LOUIS ASHWORTH)

really been for us is giving us something to talk about - some students don't seem to be taking it seriously."

They continued, "I feel that this situa-

tion has been a huge ice breaker amongst the freshers", with another fresher adding, "he's really brought us together in a way."

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News

The UCU ballots explained Will there be further strikes?

Eileen Brady

News Correspondent

Chloe Bayliss and Molly Killeen

Senior News Editors

On September 9th, two industrial action ballots opened to members of the University and College Union (UCU). The first ballot demands higher pay and more equality for those who work in higher and further education, and the second rejects an increase in pension contributions.

UCU encourages members, who have until voting closes on the 30th of October, to vote in support of Industrial Action and also Action Short of a Strike in both ballots.

According to UCU, over the past ten years university staff have seen their pay diminish each year. This year staff are facing yet another below-inflation pay offer, effectively a pay cut, while at the same time being expected to increase the amount they contribute towards their pensions. The combination of these factors amounts to a fall of almost 4% in real terms wages.

"As living in Cambridge becomes more and more expensive, we just can't afford another decrease in pay," Jennifer Marchant, acting president of Cambridge UCU, said, noting that the wage reduction would exacerbate inequalities already seen in higher education, including the



▲ UCU protestors are a familiar sight along King's Parade (LOUIS ASHWORTH)

gender pay gap and other disparities for BME and disabled staff.

Should Cambridge UCU members vote in favour of industrial action, academic and research staff, as well as post-doctoral and postgraduate students may strike, beginning any time between mid-November and the end of April 2020. This could have an impact on lectures, depart-

mental supervisions, and administrative work including marking, similar to the strikes in 2018.

However, in order for this action to go ahead, 50% of all eligible UCU members must vote, and from those who vote, 50% must vote yes in order for the strikes to go ahead.

This voter turnout is far from guar-

anteed nationally, as it comes on the heels of a failed vote to strike for pay last February. While 69.8% of UCU members in England, Scotland and Wales voted in support of strike action and 80.5% backed action short of a strike, the voter turnout of 41% nationwide failed to meet the 50% turnout threshold needed to take action.

Marchant noted that this time, however, the result may be different in Cambridge as UCU are running "disaggregated ballots, which means that if locally we reach the 50% threshold we can strike," she said. "People can see their working conditions deteriorate, and they're fired up by the deepening inequality that creates."

She added that although the Union failed to pass the threshold in February's votes on a national level, the 50% threshold was met in Cambridge.



Recap: UCU strikes in 2018

2018's strikes saw hundreds of Cambridge staff strike over a pensions dispute. The fourteen days of industrial action were spread over a four-week period from February to March and came in response to changes by Universities UK (UUK) to employees' pensions scheme. These changes would have left a typical lecturer almost £10,000 a year worse off in retirement.

88% of voters backed the strike proposal with a 58% turnout. 65 universities saw industrial action hit their campuses.

The strikes initially impacted lectures and seminars, but then extended to departmental supervisions. A provisional agreement between UCU and UUK ended the strikes in April.

A closer look at the ballots

The first ballot is protesting unfair wages. According to the UCU website, since 2009 the wages of university staff have fallen by over 20% in real terms. At the same time, their workloads have increased to "unprecedented levels", resulting in staff performing "an average of two days' unpaid work every week." The ballot is insisting that pay keeps up with the cost of living, and also protests the increasing number of "precarious" fixed term contracts.

Protesting pay disparities, the Cambridge branch of UCU notes that the ballot is especially important for the institution it represents, due to the fact that, whilst the gender pay gap across the higher education sector as a whole is 12%, it stands at 19.6% in Cambridge.

The second ballot protests increased pensions contributions, which are set to rise to 9.6% in October. UCU described this plan as amounting to "another pay cut."

Employers did offer to only increase the contribution rate to 9.1% rather than 9.6% for two years, but the union declined, saying, "The [UCU's higher education committee] decided that while [the offer] was a step in the right direction it did not go far enough."

"As well as being too little, it would only have applied up to October 2021.

After that our contributions would go up to 11%, as originally scheduled."

Calling on students to support the UCU's demands on pay and pension contributions, the National Union of Students (NUS) and the UCU issued a joint statement on September 30th.

"We believe that the failure to address ever higher salaries for vice-chancellors and principals, while attacking pensions, sends a hugely damaging message to both students and staff," it reads.

Marchant acknowledged that strikes can be difficult but emphasized the necessity of industrial action in this case.

"Nobody wants to go on strike, and nobody takes industrial action lightly: it's hard on staff, and hard on students; but it's difficult to see how else we can bring universities back to the negotiating table." She added that, in the past, strikes have forced employers to consider the union's demands.

"As a result [of February's failed vote], universities have felt free to ignore our demands. Compare that to last year, when – after university staff staged an unprecedented round of industrial action – employers suddenly looked seriously at the data that UCU had been presenting on the health of the pension scheme and found that the Union's view was sound."

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City Council cuts carbon emissions by a quarter

Mitchell May
News Correspondent

A report released on Monday highlighted Cambridge City Council's progress in cutting carbon emissions from its operations, showing a 25.2% reduction over four years.

The steady fall through the period 2014/15 to 2018/19 is due both to the council's actions and a shift in national electricity production from coal-fired power stations towards renewable energy.

This is well ahead of the council's reduction target, which had hoped for a 15% drop in emissions by 2021. The reduction is also in line with a government target of reaching net zero carbon emissions by 2050, announced in June

“It is essential [to] work together with us to make Cambridge net zero carbon”



this year.

Since the establishment of a Climate Change Fund in 2008, the council has spent over £1.5m on measures to limit carbon output within its operations,

▲ The Guildhall has had solar panels installed (SIMON LOCK)

with further funds earmarked for future use. These measures have included the installation of solar panels on larger council properties including the Guildhall and improving energy efficiency in

council properties by fitting low-energy LED lighting and better managing energy use.

Steps have also been taken by the council as part of its Climate Change Strategy to support the city's residents, businesses and visitors in reducing their carbon emissions.

These have involved, for instance, encouraging the use of environmentally friendly transport with the installation of charging points for electric taxis and the improvement of bicycle parking provision in the city centre.

In February, Cambridge's Labour-controlled council was one of many across the country to declare a 'climate emergency', adopting the more ambitious aim of reaching carbon neutrality by 2030, a move urged by climate activists and recently adopted as Labour Party policy.

Cllr Rosy Moore, Executive Councillor for Climate Change, Environment and City Centre, is clear in the report about the need to further reduce carbon emissions, saying, "It is essential that residents, businesses and other large organisations work together with us to make Cambridge net zero carbon as soon as possible," she said.

"We would like to thank residents, businesses and other organisations in Cambridge for all their efforts to reduce their own carbon emissions. We would also urge everyone in the city to think about how to go further in cutting emissions, including by consuming less heat, less meat, and less fossil-fuelled transport."



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News

Access Oxbridge founder receives Prime Minister's 'Points of Light' award

Molly Killeen
Senior News Editor

The pioneer of Access Oxbridge, a digital mentorship platform aimed at levelling the playing field for state school applicants to Oxford and Cambridge, has been recognized by the Prime Minister with a Points of Light Award.

Joe Seddon, a recent graduate of Mansfield College, Oxford, founded Access Oxbridge in 2018 and released the program in app-format this year. It was Seddon's experience at Oxford, and what he describes as the "shock" of discovering that many of his privately educated peers had had long-term tutoring and intensive interview preparation, which motivated him to seek to actively address the access issue through launching this programme.

Prime Minister Boris Johnson wrote, "I know you do this with no thought of praise or reward but allow me to offer my recognition of how 'Access Oxbridge' is giving the most talented young people from underrepresented backgrounds the skills and confidence to win places they deserve at two of our country's finest, world-leading universities."

The Points of Light Award was first established by President George H.W.

Bush in 1990 and its UK counterpart was launched in 2014. Since then it has been awarded on a daily basis, with the aim of recognizing "outstanding individual volunteers-people who are making a change in their community." Recent recipients have been active in a variety of fields, from social care to championing global sustainability.

In a statement Joe, the 1256th recipient of the award, said "I am honoured to receive this award from the Prime Minister on behalf of Access Oxbridge, and would like to take this opportunity to pay tribute to our incredible mentors and inspirational students."

"Education has the ability to transform lives, and we must continue to work to ensure that those with incredible talent are able to succeed irrespective of background...every day I wake up with a spring in my step knowing that we have the ability to make a lasting impact on people's lives, and empower our students to succeed without limit."

Writing on the Access Oxbridge website Seddon says that establishing outreach programs which encourage state school students to apply is just the first hurdle in admissions.

Beyond this, applicants need resources and confidence in order to approach the process on a level playing field with



▲ Joe Seddon, founder of Access Oxbridge, outside his college, Mansfield, in Oxford (JOE SEDDON)

those coming from a private school background.

While Cambridge's state school intake increased incrementally this year, with a figure of 68% up from 2018's 65.2%, it

continues to trail far behind recent national trends, which show that at least 90% of those enrolling in higher education every year between 2013-2018 came from state schools.



Breaking news,
around the
clock
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University comes under fire in Senate House discussion over climate policy

Victor Jack
News Correspondent

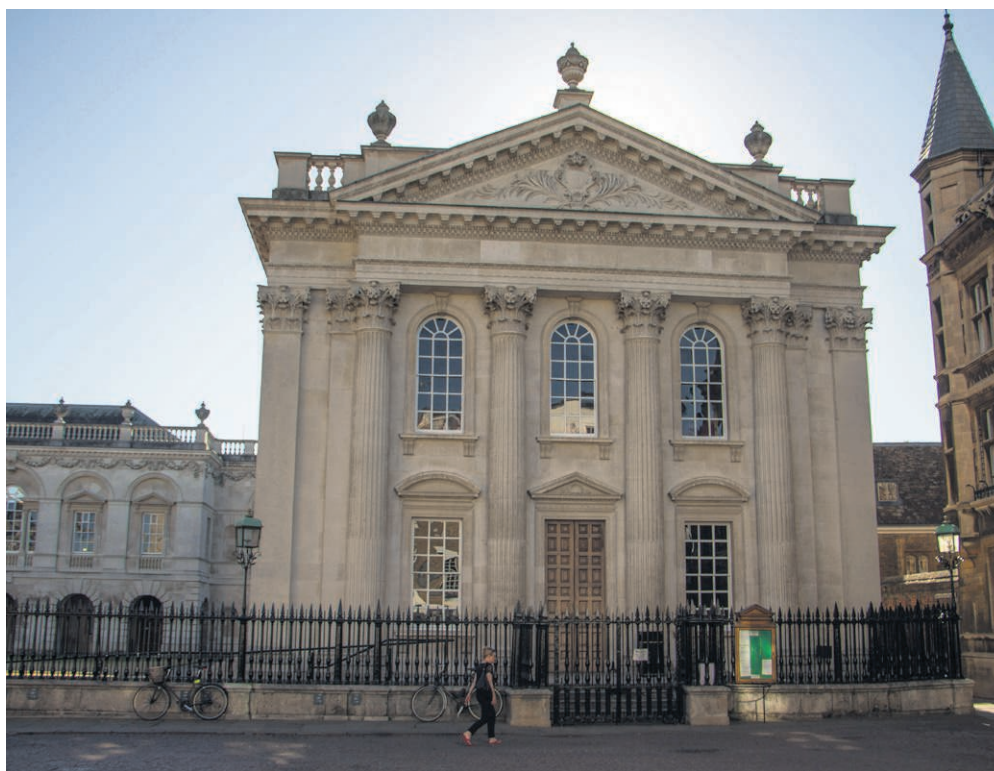
On Tuesday afternoon at Senate House, Professor Ian White, the Deputy Vice Chancellor, heard a series of speeches from students and academic staff on the University's 'response to the climate crisis beyond divestment'.

Speakers including the Reverend Jeremy Caddick, Dean of Emmanuel, and a Special Adviser to the Vice Chancellor decried the University's unsustainable approaches to growth, local transport and relationships with the fossil fuel industry.

The discussion comes after Vice-Chancellor Stephen Toope announced in his annual address the launch of 'Cambridge Zero', a new multidisciplinary research programme aimed at creating a sustainable future. He also pledged the University would fulfil the "science-based target" of reducing its carbon emissions to zero by 2048.

"The inconvenient truth is that if we are to reduce emissions, we need to drastically reduce growth until we get on top of this," said Ian Leslie, Special Adviser to the Vice Chancellor with special responsibility for Environmental Sustainability.

Leslie, also a Computer Science fellow at Christ's, highlighted how energy intensive the University's expansion of 19% in the past 5 years has been. He suggests



conducting full lifecycle analyses into new buildings, and incorporating their carbon footprints before construction.

CUSU Ethical Affairs Officer Jake Simms further stressed how carbon reduction targets do not include several University arms such as the planned

▲ Senate House, where the discussion took place (DANIEL GAYNE)

Northwest Cambridge site, nor do they encompass indirect emissions such as staff travel - "an estimated 80% of [its] total emissions".

In January Varsity revealed the University is set to miss its 2010 target of a 4% reduction in its carbon emissions

“
[As a staff member]
I am not incentivised to cut carbon emissions
”

by 2021, and failed to meet 8 out of 13 of their sustainability targets in 2018.

Computer Science lecturer Dr Alice Hutchins emphasised as a staff member, she is "not incentivised to cut carbon emissions [but to] work in ways which can be damaging to the environment", such as using high capacity servers in research and much air travel.

High living costs mean staff often live far away from the town centre, she continued, and poor public transport make sustainable transport difficult.

Fellow Computer Scientist Dr Daniel Thomas agreed, noting "25% of cycle parking is of insecure design, 15% is in a poor state of repair" and new road designs disregard cyclists' safety whilst "the University currently pays out £3 million a year to encourage staff to drive."

Student and Zero Carbon campaigner Ollie Banks called attention to the University's past close links with the fossil fuel industry, branding Cambridge an "extractive research machine".

Chloe Newbold, a student at Catz, further highlighted how Cambridge Zero lists the BP Institute as a key partner in its 'climate repair' section, something she argued makes the University "complicit in a model of economic development that favours profit over social and ecological justice."

The full speeches will be made available on the University Cambridge Reporter website next week.

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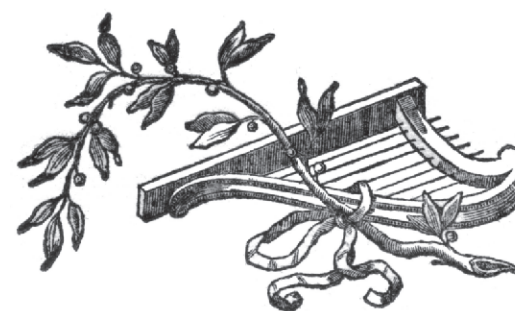
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Features

Talkin' 'bout my generation

Siyang Wei writes of how pinning all of our hopes on young people isn't the way forward



▲ Illustration by Kate Towsey for Varsity

The year between my graduation and return to Cambridge was full of strange new experiences. I moved back home, living with my family and exploring the city I grew up in as an adult for the first time; I got my first full-time permanent job (although still working at a students' union); and, having mostly exited student life, I started spending significant amounts of time with people both younger and significantly older than I am.

A few months ago, the managers and marketing department at my workplace were strongly advised to attend a university-run lecture called 'How to talk to Generation Z' — presumably to teach them to communicate with students (although delivered by a middle-aged man). With all the discussion about generations going on at the office, I realised I didn't actually really know what they meant, so I had a quick browse on Wikipedia. The news that I am apparently, technically, *not* a millennial really rocked my world. My manager, it transpired, is a millennial, and was also learning how to talk to me.

In 2019, the language of generations is everywhere. While the term 'millennial' was first coined in the late eighties, it has gained particular cultural momentum over the past decade or so with stereotypes of today's young adults as self-absorbed and sensitive. More recently, notions of 'intergenerational mistrust' or polarisation — particularly between reactionary 'baby boomers' and progressive 'millennials' — have come increasingly to mark our political discourse.

It was the iconic social stature of these two generations that led me to (apparently falsely, although admittedly half-heartedly) identify with the latter for so long. As a mid-late teen, it was rare to go a week without hearing about the new ways in which millennials were destroying Western civilisation; as a university student who happened to have fundamental criticisms of the notion of 'Western civilisation' and also to use Twitter, the identifier was a difficult siren song to resist. Given the political transformations of the past couple of years, it seems that I was not alone.

The past couple of years have witnessed a strange reclamation of sorts. Like stepping into a ready-made jacket with 'radical' already emblazoned on the back, various left-liberal movements from Youth Strike for Climate to Our Future Our Choice have embraced aesthetics of generational opposition as both a powerful call to action for other young people and a convenient, *prima facie* proof of the progressivism of their causes.

In September this year, the *Washington Post* published an article explaining "why baby boomers' grandchildren will hate them" for failing to do enough to tackle climate change; last week, a piece in *Varsity* argued that the recent high profile of youth protest is a result of "the political systems of previous generations... let[ting] us down."

“The news that I am apparently, technically, not a millennial really rocked my world”

“In 2019, the language of generations is everywhere”

I can't help but feel, however, that this analysis has got it all backwards. Its mistake has been assuming that 'generations' really are a useful framework of social or political analysis, rather than a tactical inversion of reactionary attempts by establishment politicians and media outlets to dismiss disillusionment with our current political economy as either upbringing-induced failures of character or merely youthful folly. While it might be nice to believe that we just have to wait for the angry teenagers of today to become the leaders of tomorrow to achieve a different and better world, it also stretches beyond credulity.

The reproduction of global class systems, structures of oppression, and inequality are not the result of previous generations' activists simply losing hope. When accumulation, legacy, and inheritance are the primary means by which wealth and resources are distributed, the efficacy of individual optimism or idealism is a pipe dream. The younger generation will replace the older generation, and Jacob Rees-Mogg will likely be replaced by Peter Rees-Mogg. Poverty and deprivation, too, are intergenerationally inherited.

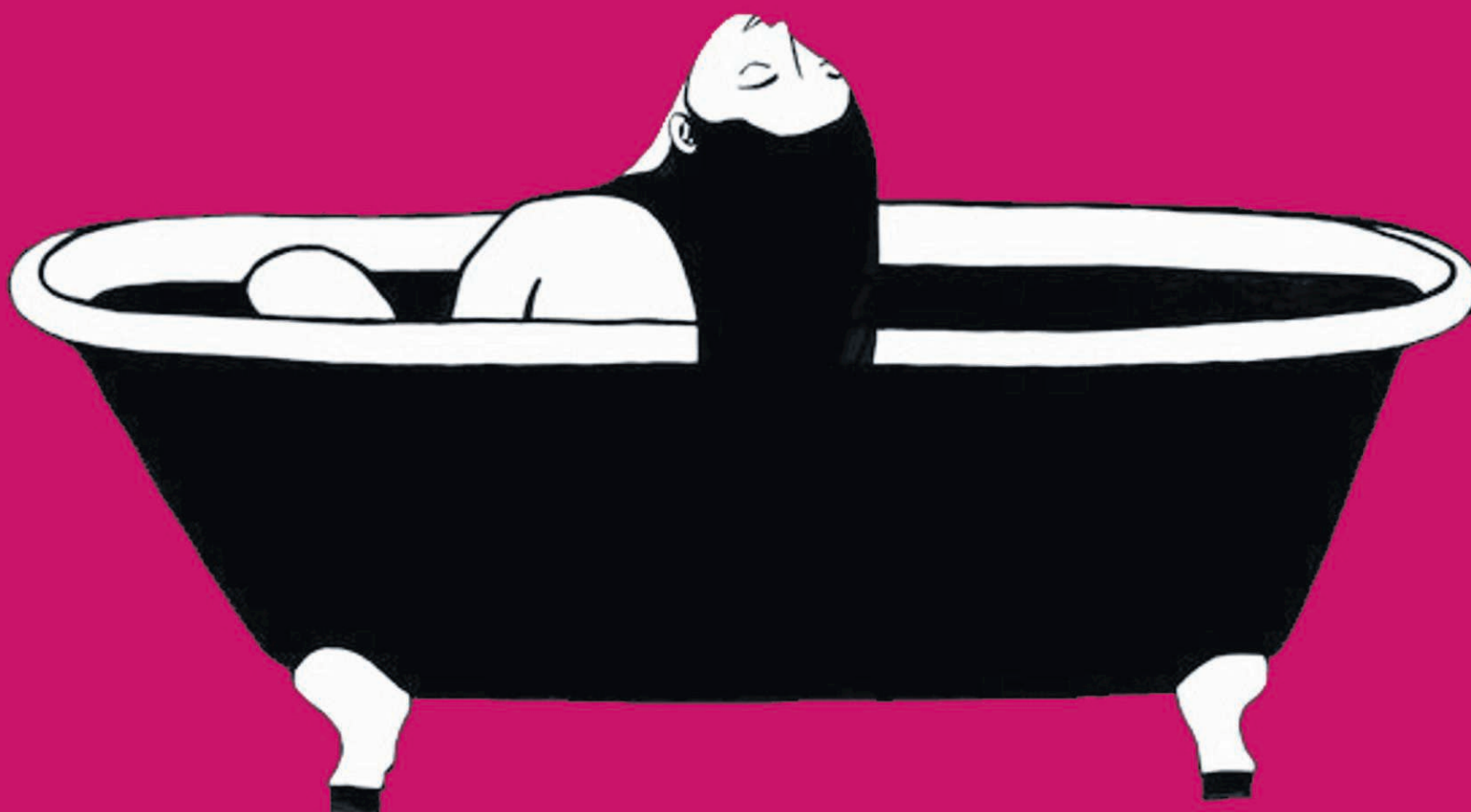
This is not to say that generational discourse can offer us no insights at all. While the notion of 'millennial burnout' is a mostly unnecessary attempt to reinvent the wheel of capitalist alienation, it's perhaps interesting to note that even relatively privileged young people are beginning to feel fatigued by neoliberalism. But the ravages of economic extraction and climate breakdown have been evident to working-class people — and particularly to Indigenous peoples and nations of the Global South — for a long, long time. In the West, the radical, anti-imperialist, and socialist movements of yesteryear didn't simply lose steam or lose hope; activist groups were infiltrated and suppressed by violent force, whole communities were decimated by policies such as the war on drugs, and potentially disruptive ideas are continually co-opted and neutralised by transformation into trite soundbites. It's possible the stereotype of older people as establishment figures is somewhat bolstered by the fact that so many radicals were silenced, exiled, or killed.

If we want any hope of turning this political moment into one of genuine transformation, this is the history and material reality with which we have to reckon, rather than simply appealing for young people as a collection of individuals to remain abstractly angry and hopeful.

The problems we face today are not the result of a negligent older generation, but inevitable consequences of global capitalism and imperialism.

And the language of 'millennials' (and generations as a whole) should stay where it largely began: in marketing and advertising, in *BuzzFeed* quizzes, and maybe in adults learning that they should talk to young people about memes for the humour value, if nothing else.

Recovery isn't a straight line



Relapses happen even when it seems like you're doing everything right, writes Bethan Ruth Moss

Content Note: This article contains discussion of anxiety, depression, and mental health recovery, and contains mention of suicide.

If you were to try to graph your recovery from mental illness, you would find that it's not a straight line with a constant gradient – any line would cut a thousand corners which you didn't have the luxury of cutting. Recovery can't be exemplified by any single moment of self-actualisation. You don't look in the mirror one day, notice your unwashed hair and the bags under your eyes, and then decide that it's time to be happy again.

Recovery is a deeply painful, deeply personal process which must be undertaken alone. When plotted on a graph, it would look more like a mountain range than a flight of stairs, with yourself and your illness the only constant variables. Even with friends, family, and professionals supporting you every step of the way, the trek to recovery is lonely.

Everyone's path to recovery is unique, and even superficially similar cases cannot be conflated, especially when we consider factors such as class, race, gender, disability, and sexuality. For exam-

“The trek to recovery is lonely”

ple, those who identify as transgender and/or male are much more likely to commit suicide than those who don't. Painting recovery as one homogenous experience cannot cure the isolation which it induces.

I was diagnosed with mixed anxiety and depressive disorder when I was 17 years old. I've taken 200mg of Sertraline, the UK's most widely prescribed antidepressant, every day since my diagnosis, and have received counselling on and off. Although it took a lot of coaxing from friends to get me to that first GP appointment, since walking out of it armed with a pack of antidepressants, I've been pretty proactive about my mental health. Despite this, my recovery has been an uphill battle, in a thunderstorm, with two broken legs.

When applying to Cambridge, a teacher advised that it “might not be the place for me” because of my illness, but this warning only made me crave a place more. I didn't believe that my application would succeed, so I never fully considered the consequences that attending such an academically rigorous university might have for my health. When I actually got here, excitement and anxiety tied my stomach into knots – I was convinced that my offer was a fluke and terrified of the prospect of my mental health interfering with my studies.

These fears were quickly realised. By week two, I was already struggling to cope; my anxiety prevented me from attending many classes and supervisions. A severe case of impostor syndrome and a prolonged bout of fresher's flu worsened my depression as term progressed.

By November, one of my supervisors emailed my Director of Studies to tell him that they were concerned about the number of supervisions I had missed – in response, I sent him an emotional email finally telling him about my illness.

Cambridge is not an environment that is conducive to recovery. Upon my arrival, I promptly informed my tutor and the college nurse of my condition and registered with a GP. I filled out a pre-counselling form to request an appointment at the University Counselling Service (UCS). I did everything right.

But when you're in recovery, doing everything right is not always enough to stop yourself from relapsing, especially when the system itself is riddled with cracks that you're at constant risk of falling through.

I had to wait a month and a half to see a counsellor at the UCS. Upon the third session, the counsellor declared that it “felt like a last session”, despite my insistence that I was still experiencing frequent anxiety attacks and depressive episodes. Cycling home, I tried to trick myself into believing that I was better. In reality the only change was that I was suddenly left without support – by the time I got to my room, I was in tears.

My story isn't an anomaly. We're all tired of reading articles about the inadequacies of mental health support services, desensitised to complaints of long waiting times for counsellors, and familiar with horror stories of supervisors and tutors who aren't sympathetic to students facing mental health issues. Yet the ubiquity of this experience is not exaggerated; a 2018 survey of more than 38,000 university

▲ Illustration by Lisha Zhong for Varsity

“I tried to trick myself into believing that I was better”

students showed that 21.5% had an active diagnosis for a mental health condition, 75.6% of whom reportedly concealed their symptoms from peers.

The stigma around mental health is gradually being lifted, but much more needs to be done. Students still carry the burden of seeking support and managing their own mental health conditions. To make the system work, we need to delegate responsibility for administering treatment to mental health service providers rather than offload it onto patients themselves. Students need to be better informed about services provided by the University, their college, and the NHS, and the University must facilitate better communication between these three providers. Students need to be thoroughly evaluated before they are discharged from counselling, and regularly checked up on afterwards, as a point of procedure.

Most importantly, students need compassion from staff and students alike. I scraped a 2:2 at the end of my first year despite missing over half of my contact hours – some of my peers and supervisors were incredibly understanding during this time, but some were completely indifferent or insensitive to my recovery process.

Others actively impeded my recovery, regarding me as ‘lazy’. We need to see students in recovery from mental illness clearly; they're doing everything they can to get better, whilst simultaneously juggling incredibly demanding degrees. We're all on our own paths to recovery, but a bit of compassion from those around us can make us feel a little less alone on the journey.

Features

From 'too brown' to 'not brown enough'

Inaya Mohmood
reflects on how
Cambridge changed
her relationship with
her Pakistani heritage

Growing up in a majority-white area, my identity as a Pakistani always took a back seat. I've only visited Pakistan once in my life. I was around six years old, and the culture shock I experienced as I left my large town in England for a small village in rural Kashmir was so overwhelming that I've turned down every opportunity my parents have given me to go back since. I found it hard to claim a culture that so visibly marked me as different.

It was tiring to always have to help strangers correctly pronounce my name, ask for clarification whenever people asked me where I was from, and consistently be the only person in my classes to speak up on issues relating to being BME, whether cultural appropriation or institutional racism. These issues have always been and will always be really close to my heart, but as a 13- or 14-year-old, being the only person who had the lived experiences to talk about them felt like a burden.



“I was no longer the only person I knew who was Muslim or Pakistani”

At Cambridge, I found myself in an environment where even though I was in the minority, there was a minority *community* that I felt like I belonged to. Through student societies like the Islamic Society and Pakistan Society, I was finally interacting with people who I could relate to when it came to lived experiences. I was no longer the only person I knew who was Muslim or Pakistani, and knowing that I shared a background with a community larger than myself made all the difference; I no longer felt alone.

It didn't take long for the 'coconut'

▲ “I've only visited Pakistan once in my life”

(PIXABAY)

jokes to start. They didn't bother me; I laugh at them too and I often agree with their reasoning. I can't speak Urdu, I don't know anything about cricket or Pakistani politics, and honestly, I hesitate a little when people ask me where in Kashmir I'm from.

But there is a sad truth behind the jokes, my background and being raised in a majority white area meant that where I once stood out as someone who was 'too brown' to fully fit in within some social circles. I now felt as though I wasn't 'brown enough', I couldn't join in when conversations about Pakistani music, or politics came up because I didn't know enough, if anything, about them. I could sit in a room full of 'brown' people and still feel out of place.

For me, the biggest obstacle that has held me back from fully embracing my Pakistani heritage is the fact that I can't speak Urdu. Laughably, when I was at school, being able to say 'hello' and 'how are you' in Urdu was enough for me to be regarded by my white friends as bilingual. Obviously, now that I'm around other people of Pakistani heritage, that really doesn't cut it. I've always thought of Urdu as a beautiful language, and there is something very poignant about sitting in a room full of Urdu-speakers knowing that there is a massive hole in my knowledge of my country and its culture. As if not

being able to speak to my grandparents in their native tongue wasn't bad enough, knowing that I won't be able to teach my children the language of their ancestors is equally difficult.

There has been something so bitter-sweet about my time here. Finally finding spaces at Cambridge where I'm not made to feel like an outsider has been comforting and empowering. A part of me is grateful for the chance to embrace the culture and the country that form a huge part of who I am. But the other half of me wishes that I didn't grow up so oblivious to the beauty of Pakistan, and that I didn't spend so long trying to fit in that I forgot about the country I came from. I know I can't change how I felt back then — no one wants to feel different, and we've all felt insecure at some point about whether we fit in or not.

I'm grateful that this year, the friends I've made and the experiences I've had have meant that I'm more open to exploring the culture of the country my family is from. There is so much more to who I am than simply being 'different' because of my ethnicity, and I've learnt more about myself this year than I ever had before. Slowly but surely, I'm undoing the whitewashing that had kept my own Pakistani heritage hidden away from me, and rediscovering who I am and where I come from.



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When the laughter stops

Watching That '70s Show, *Joe Wills* saw similarities between the 'comedic dad' and members of his own family

I've always wanted to watch a sitcom that was miserable. It would still consist of three cameras, high-key lighting, and a laughtrack, but there would be nothing to laugh at. The family in their plastic home-set fight, they hurt each other, they betray each other, they wish they were married to or fathered by someone else, and by the end of the twenty minutes, the credits roll as usual, leaving us without any pithy takeaway or reassuring assertion of the benign family unit.

A few years ago, I became ravenously addicted to the mean, small-minded sitcom *That '70s Show*. There's an episode of the show where the boy living with the main family is arrested for buying some weed. When the hateful disciplinarian father realises that his own son has been at it as well, he goes insane in an impotent attempt to retain his authority. He demands that everyone stay inside, watches their every move, and boards up the windows. Even the wife cannot escape his tyranny as she tries, desperately, to mediate. The laughs continue, nervously; the atmosphere of dread is palpable. The comic façade almost breaks down, revealing the terror that lies underneath: the oppressive

patriarch that our favourite comedy dad has always so obviously been. But then, our twenty minutes are up. Some resolution is reached and the credits roll; the pain is trivialised, swept away to make room for the next escapade. Sometimes, I imagine the characters can see and hear the viewers. They play along but inside they're thinking: Why are you laughing? What's so funny about any of this?

The comedy dad of *That '70s Show* has been told that young people who smoke cannabis are no longer themselves. He has also been told that a good father exerts discipline and makes his family do what he wants them to do. This power justifies the pain he went through as a child, and so he sets about enforcing it with brutal efficiency.

The original transgression is forgotten in his spiralling attempts to prove to his family and to us that he is the man of the household. He might reconsider his actions by the end of the episode, but the damage has already been done, to be played and replayed in the minds of his victims, maybe for their entire lives, and accidentally displacing itself into their own relationships, haunting their actions. But at no point is this ever acknowledged; instead, there is laughter.

We say we find things funny because they are "relatable." What is funny is what is normal and shared. Yet at the same time, laughter can bring up issues of morality; comedy can be "dark", jokes can be in "bad taste." The canned laughter of the invisible audience normalises and accepts, but at the same time it binds them to the object of that laughter, a form of silent solidarity. It does not intervene, it does not describe or accuse or explain, but almost perversely, it says: "I know. I know."

In relationships with other people, there are certain things we feel we can never say. We spend our whole lives, sometimes, in negotiation of these blind spots. Sometimes we try to make covert languages which can say without saying. In these languages, a single word can mean lots of different things, or nothing at all. Once, for instance, when my dad had not gotten out of bed for weeks, he said to me: "I'm sorry."

When my parents and I still used to go to family Christmas dinners, we would find them incredibly stressful events. At these group functions, an atmosphere of oppressive tension pervades the house, centering persistently around the figure of my granddad, our very own dysfunctional authoritarian figure.

Arguments are constantly flaring up and fizzling out, not just between him and others but among everyone, and always about minute and inconsequential issues. Thinking back on this, there was always something performative about these dinners, not just in the weary pantomiming of fun (that was always obvious) but also in the bickering or the all-out fights. It's as if each person is trying to demonstrate their awareness of what lies underneath without ever saying it.

When my grandfather has stormed off in what is termed a "mood," when he is otherwise preoccupied, or when he has mercifully allowed them to be alone with each other, my mum, grandma, and auntie start talking. Invariably, almost compulsively, they reminisce about the pain he has caused in their lives.

I can never tell if this is the healing of trauma or traumatic healing, the constant repetition of things that can never be forgotten. Even among three grown women the conversations have the feel of



▲ Illustration by Kate Towsey for Varsity

the illicit, of naming the truth, of speaking the unspeakable. They do not (or cannot) say such things as: "this hurts. Why has this happened to us? How could this happen to us?" But they do laugh, turning the horrors of their collective past into absurd anecdotes. A new status quo, a new normality, is created. Behind the laughter there is silence.

"One day we'll all laugh about this," people say, deferring relief to a vague moment of shared humorous retrospect. For a long time I was taken in by the sentiment of this platitude, imagining some shining future where the pains of life were dulled by the idea of laugh-

ter. But in light of what I have realised about pain I'm no longer sure if such an exterior state can be achieved, since laughter can never really exist outside of the thing it laughs at, but always must be complicit.

I see this in the self-deprecating tendencies of many of my friends and in my own attitudes to the worst parts of my childhood, this hopeless urge to trivialise and therefore escape. Perhaps we can and should laugh, but as we do we should also be aware of the social function of humour as an escape, a normaliser, and ultimately a signifier of something which cannot be named.

Learning to critique helped me critique my learning

Cait Findley writes of her journey of academic discovery, from Shakespeare to queer theory

I began this series of columns last year by describing it as the non-academic lessons that I've learned at Cambridge, outside libraries and supervision rooms. However, it would be unrepresentative to neglect the non-academic lessons that I've learned in specifically academic spaces, alongside the quotations and critical debates that I've spent the last three years considering.

Thanks to Cambridge's exam-based assessment style, I've crammed a lot of information into my brain in the last few months about such diffuse topics as Aristotle's position on tragic theatre, the role of architecture in shaping experiences in museums, and medieval beliefs about ghosts and magic. Such is the beauty of an English degree. Most importantly, I've learned that following your interests does not make you a cliché — it makes you a

better student.

I've often been worried about somehow being boring or not 'academic' enough by choosing to write about things that I have a personal interest in. I don't want my identity to become my only point of interest academically. I don't want to write about women or queerness purely because I am a woman and queer. For instance, at school, whenever a question about women and feminism came up in English lessons, a groan would go up around the room and all eyes would swivel towards me.

It became a bit embarrassing, something I would get defensive about — and when I came to Cambridge, I was deeply concerned that writing about queer theory, feminism, certain authors, whatever it may be, would somehow diminish my academic credentials and raise supervisors' eyebrows. However, I found the opposite to be true; students and supervisors here tend to be more accepting of personal intellectual interests, with the notable exception of one who said we should 'forgive' Spenser for being a misogynist because he was a reflection of his times. Yes — and a feminist reading is a valid modern critique.

By the time I got to third year, though, I changed my position. I realised that there is no more academic credit to writing about

“I don't want my identity to become my only point of interest academically”

structuralism or post-structuralism (and to be honest, I still don't entirely know the difference) than there is to writing about queer theory or intersectional feminism.

Shakespeare may form a large part of the English Tripos, but that's not to say you can't find anything more interesting to write about in Aphra Behn or Margaret Cavendish. In fact, certain writers and areas have been under-researched, and are therefore extremely exciting areas to look into. This is a very English-centric view, because it's obviously the subject I know best, but it translates across into other humanities subjects, too.

The essays I've written on issues that I've had a personal connection to have often been my best essays, at least in terms of enjoyment. For my second year portfolio, I wrote about romantic friendships as covers for lesbian relationships in a novel and Anne Lister's diary, and it was certainly one of the most fun essays that I spent time reading and researching for, even if I never got to hear back about precisely what mark it got. The library hours flew by far faster than when I had to read four of Shakespeare's history plays in a week.

My second year dissertation was about the capitalism and the female grotesque in Margaret Atwood's novels, making the argument that intense scrutiny on

“The library hours flew by far faster”

women's bodies is intended to maximise their spending on beauty products, but that the standards of beauty are eternally changing, which means that consumerism thrives eternal. Writing about those topics was a better use of my time and energy than forcing myself to cover the same dry content that has been done by so many before me.

I have emerged from the other side of my three years at Cambridge with a vastly improved knowledge of the literary canon (although it is still limited to a very Western-centric vision), but the educational byproducts of my studies and other opportunities I've had have been just as important to me as my degree itself. Sports, student politics, and social endeavours have taught me various lessons: that showing up for other people builds mutual bonds of love and support; that looking after your mental wellbeing looks different for everyone; and that leaving your room will lead to either a good time or a good story.

The prospectus sells Cambridge as a package, and it truly is. On one hand you get the academic challenge that makes it the best university in the UK. On the other, you learn a whole host of things that you never expected.

Thanks, Cambridge.

Opinion



Cambridge's lack of a proper Freshers' Week sets an alarming precedent

A five-day Freshers' Week is just another sign that Cambridge refuses to adapt to the needs of its students

Emma Turner

Four days after arriving in Cambridge, barely unpacked and already exhausted, I was having my first ever essay crisis: I had just been given a 2000-word assignment on a 19th century French book I hadn't yet finished reading, to be handed in in just a few days' time.

Lectures had not yet begun, freshers' events had not finished, but there I was in the library. This was the first essay crisis of many, but it was one that set an alarming precedent. Such an early piece of substantial work – accompanied by initial translation tasks, introductory meetings and the never-ending reading list – seemed like a clear message that work should come (temporally and figuratively) before fun, before society meetings and before my own wellbeing while settling into a new home. The lack of a proper freshers' week is borderline irresponsible in this sense: students, many of whom have never lived away from home before, should not be sent the message that they are expected to juggle and catch everything before they've even settled in.

Whether a college's welcome events stretch beyond the opening Tuesday of full term is somewhat irrelevant, even if the events do not end within the first few days, the work inevitably starts during

that time. Of course, incoming freshers are unlikely to expect the work at Cambridge to be easy, and nor would they expect to have the first week of term completely free for fun and socialising. But they should not expect to have to turn down several social events in the first few days out of sheer impostor-syndrome-driven panic. In the face of their very first deadline at the most prestigious university in the country, it's understandable that some students feel they need to make a premature decision: burn out trying to juggle everything, face the wrath of a disappointed supervisor, or prioritise proving themselves academically over settling themselves mentally.

The pressure of a freshers' week in which we must continually choose between work, socialising and mental health also sets up unhealthy expectations for the year to come; expectations which lead you to believe that spending the night before a deadline in the library until 3am is normal. It would take until exam term for me to realise that such night-time essay dramas weren't necessary, that these habits were, in fact, counterproductive, and I would work a lot more efficiently by giving myself breaks to be human and have fun. But I should have been given the time to find my feet and make this

▲ Cambridge freshers matriculated this week (ANDREW HYNES)

“These expectations can weigh equally on physical health”

discovery from the outset.

These expectations can weigh equally on physical health, particularly in freshers' week when the dreaded flu hangs in the air, waiting to strike the unsuspecting bodies who run from one venue to the next. Ferociously burning the candle at both ends, attending our very first lectures in the morning, then trying to get to know our new college friends in the evening, it's no wonder so many of us fall ill. In my case, a bad case of freshers' flu treated with a fear-driven work ethic rather than a few nights of quality sleep escalated into successive bouts of laryngitis, tonsillitis, and conjunctivitis, interspersed with a sharp lapse into depression. I didn't get physically well again until the New Year, and the first night back at home, I slept for 12 hours straight. My case was not an uncommon one among my peers.

Moreover, our painfully short freshers' 'week' is the beginning of our very own 'Stanford Duck Syndrome': looking around, we know that all of our peers also have plenty of work to be doing, but they also seem to be attending three different societies, playing sport, making plenty of new friends, and getting a good night's sleep, too. Far too often, achieving such a balance is not possible: sacrifices must be made. Convinced this

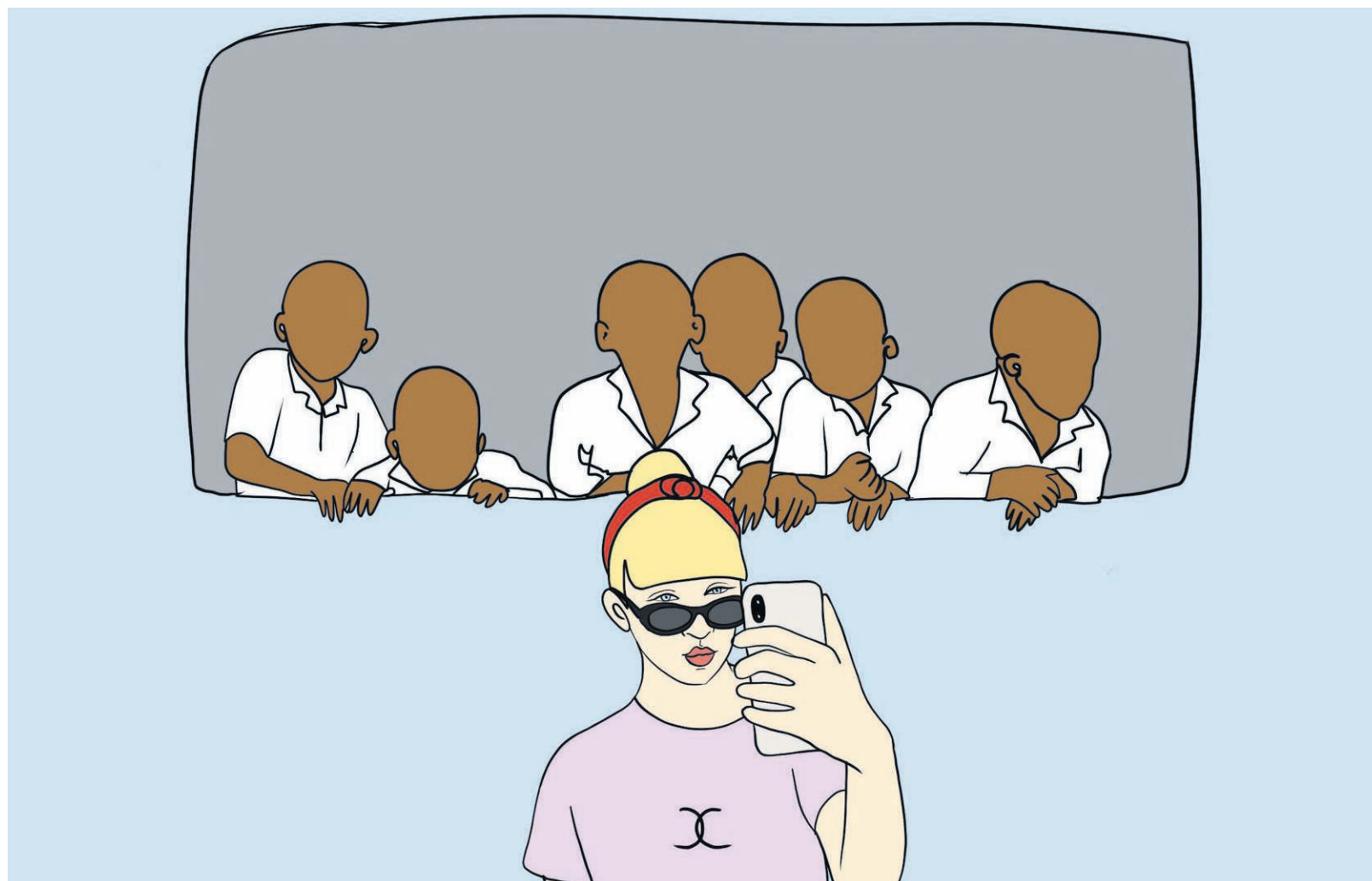
is simply part of the “Cambridge experience” and afraid to admit we're not coping, we paddle frantically onwards with a smile on our face and a #blessed in our Instagram captions.

Of course, the main argument for this curtailed freshers' 'week' is likely tradition, with lectures starting on Thursdays, and only eight weeks in which to cram in almost half a syllabus, no doubt Cambridge feels that either using Week One to begin gently or giving students a week and a half before term starting would be wasteful.

But instead of clinging so tightly to the chaos of our 8-week sprint, we should use our prized analytical skills to question whether this tradition is suited to the needs of today's students, or if it merely adds to harmful stereotypes surrounding the University's culture which may serve as a deterrent for talented but disadvantaged students wishing to make an application.

Our 'freshers' five days' are just another symptom of a university which is yet to adapt to facilitate equality of opportunity for all its students. We must rethink traditions which are harming an already precarious work-life balance, and communicate efficiently to foster healthy expectations for freshers across all colleges.

Voluntourism is damaging. Period.



◀ Illustration by Alisa Santikarn for Varsity

lighted as a justification for intervention, whilst similar domestic issues are overlooked.

It's clear that the White Saviour Complex is a pervasive issue which exists on a large scale, but that does not mean that you can't do anything to make sure that you're not contributing to it. As a Cambridge student, you can apply your critical thinking skills beyond your supervisions and ask yourself a few questions:

1. Are you qualified to do the work that you plan on doing?
2. Are you taking away jobs that others (who are actually qualified) need to live?
3. Are you doing work that is beneficial in the long run, without your physical presence?

It is also possible to help people in need without flying to the other side of the world. Instead of teaching English to children in Africa, tutoring disadvantaged students from a struggling state comprehensive school can have a greater and more positive impact.

In addition, helping local charities and social enterprises overcome their problems by offering free consulting, or working with local organisations to address seasonal issues (for example, holiday hunger, a condition that occurs when a child's household is, or will, become food insecure during the school holidays) can be an incredibly rewarding use of time and resources.

This, and so much more, can be done right here in England, and are more effective ways of utilising your skills without causing any unintended harm. None of this is to say that you cannot or should not support whenever an issue abroad resonates with you.

Donating money to locally based and led organisations, who most likely to have the technical and cultural expertise to use it effectively without your oversight, however, is a much more ethical and sustainable way of supporting. Technology has enabled the rise of online volunteering, which enables you to contribute your skills without interfering with local autonomy.

For more information on alternatives to voluntourism, visit: <https://nowhitesaviors.org/resources/>

Folu Ogunyeye is the International Development Officer at Cambridge Hub, a student-led group that offers and publicises impactful, Cambridge-based volunteering opportunities

As exams finish and May Week draws to a close, the long break looms over every Cambridge student, anxious to fill it with something exciting. Making a positive impact through volunteering can sound much more appealing than sitting in a corporate office all summer, and even more so is the opportunity to combine voluntary work with a holiday in an exotic location.

It comes as no surprise, then, that an industry exists to provide exactly that: the rapidly growing voluntourism industry is worth over \$2 billion annually, meeting the demand of a generation known for being more socially conscious and globally interconnected than ever before. For volunteers, the experience provides many benefits: cultural enrichment, self-discovery, impressive CV content — all whilst helping those in need. Yet, as global inequalities between wealthy and poorer countries persist, we need to ask, “Who is really benefiting from voluntourism?”

Although intentions can be well-meaning, it has been proven time and time again that voluntourism not only benefits the volunteers and Western-based organisations the most, but also damages the local economies and individuals that were meant to be ‘helped’ in the first place.

As an industry with no form of international regulation, there are no rigorous measures in place to protect the communities from exploitation by voluntourism companies or the volunteers themselves. For example, orphanage tourism has led to children who are not actual orphans being bought from their parents in order to meet the increasing demand for volunteering opportunities.

Hoping to give their children a better education, parents are scammed into placing their children at risk of abuse and exploitation by the orphanage companies.

In addition, interacting and bonding with volunteers that come and go every few weeks can impair the children's social and cognitive development as they cannot form long-lasting relationships.

From an economic perspective, voluntourism structurally disrupts local economies by taking away jobs that can be performed better and faster by local workers, contributing to high unemployment rates. This is clearly seen in voluntourism projects involving construction work, carried out by individuals with no prior experience, which then has to be torn down and redone by qualified local workers, if the extra costs can be afforded. In the long term, voluntourism reinforces an economic structure that is dependent on foreign intervention rather than autonomy.

How can so much damage come from a seemingly innocent desire to do good? One major factor at play is the White Saviour Complex, which is the underlying narrative that drives the voluntourism industry. In short, it centres a ‘Third-World’ victim in need of rescuing, with the position of ‘hero’ occupied by white people from the West, determined to help those who cannot help themselves.

The narrative then revolves around the perspective of the ‘White Saviour’: motivated to make a difference abroad, heartbroken upon witnessing poverty firsthand, but eventually enlightened about the privilege that life in the West offers. With this focus, the needs of those supposedly being helped are overlooked,

“It disrupts local economies by taking away jobs that can be performed better and faster by local workers”

which can have disastrous consequences: Renee Bach, an American missionary who moved to Uganda to set up a malnutrition clinic, is being sued by two Ugandan mothers whose babies were killed under her care, alongside 117 other infant deaths. Bach has no formal medical qualifications. This situation would be inconceivable were an unqualified Ugandan to open a medical clinic in the UK and treat children.

Whilst this may be an extreme example, the ability to cause harm without any immediate repercussions is a privilege that applies to all volunteers, regardless of the scale of collateral damage.

Beyond the voluntourism industry, this racial bias can also be seen in the media and foreign policy, where problems in non-Western countries are high-

Get to know Varsity

We're having a Freshers' Squash!
When: Sunday, 13th October, 1 – 5pm
Where: Varsity's offices, 16 Mill Lane

We're also hosting a BME freshers' squash, open only to BME students, on Monday, 14th October, 3 – 5pm at 16 Mill Lane

Chat with members of the current team, and learn how you can get involved with Cambridge's largest and only independent student newspaper! Light refreshments will be provided.

Reading lists full of convoluted academic writing are exclusionary

The convoluted writing style of many academic texts can be overwhelming for students coming to university without that form of cultural capital

Aisha Niazi

Before Cambridge, I always romanticised academia: a life filled with long, complex books that you somehow understood, as if part of an elite club. Once at Cambridge, I spent ages staring at the pages of Hannah Arendt, aiming to decipher them, before reverting to SparkNotes. When complaining about the density of her writings to an academic, he chuckled and responded: “I find her to be perfectly clear.” I was left wondering whether I was alone in toiling through near-incomprehensible books to get to the point.

I later discovered that my course mates also found Arendt to be a dire read. Her ideas were intriguing, but actually discovering them was a colossal task. Academic books can be sheltered from criticism in society, often seen as too lofty and intellectual to even comment on. The writing is frequently filled with jargon, which seems infallible to all but a few. How can we expect students to analyse books that can seem as though written in some inaccessible code?

Cambridge, or any university, should be a place where intelligent people thrive. Yet by continuing to assign masses of books that overwhelm and confuse, academics can add hours to the workload of people who generally struggle with concentration. Although not diagnosed with a learning difficulty myself, I understand that such issues can be compounded for many people with learning difficulties such as ADHD or dyslexia. This is extremely exclusionary.

If students struggle, then it must feel even worse for non-students who want to



learn about intellectual topics from these sources. Academic texts are frequently presented as mysterious – so genius that only a few great minds can truly understand them. But if this is really the case, aren't the ideas just being poorly communicated?

I have always struggled with concentration. I often feel distanced from the knowledge being presented in these books: it's so overly complex that it doesn't feel as if it has been produced for me. When an academic's words aren't engaging, it drains the excitement out of learning.

This left me with a sense of imposter syndrome: a feeling that that I wasn't supposed to be in Cambridge as I couldn't connect with the academic style. Finding a rare author who wrote in a more down-

to-earth style was extremely encouraging. Why can't more academics aim for this? Books shouldn't be so dramatically distanced from how we talk in reality.

This imposter syndrome once led me to believe a career in academia was not for me. I began to view academics as desperate to peacock around, continuing a culture of convoluted debates that are separated from reality. Of course, not all of them are like this. In my experience, some do aim to make academia accessible to all, explaining concepts in simple terms and relating to their audience. I think many degrees would benefit from introducing reading that caters explanations to audience understanding: we need to make academia more human.

Ideas should be accessible to anyone with an interest in them. Some niche de-

▲ “Academia has become an elite club” (INES LETELLIER)

“Ideas should be accessible to anyone with an interest in them”

bates will of course require background reading, but ensuring language can be understood by a broad audience allows more people to actually learn, and more efficiently. In his book *Free Will*, for example, Sam Harris – a public intellectual and philosopher – writes simply, using analogies to make his point clear, while simultaneously producing a fantastic reading experience. It's incredibly short for a non-fiction piece and I found myself devouring it in a single afternoon.

Academic books might not always reach a point of mass consumption, but simple explanations of complicated ideas are often frowned upon by professors. Long winded, complex sentences have become an elitist tradition, preventing thoughts from being as easily understood or critiqued. A supervisor once told me: “we read these people for their ideas, not for their writing.” Yet I continue to read essays, articles and books from current academics that follow in the same style.

Academia has become an elite club. Students without the cultural know-how can become overwhelmed and unable to analyse these books – containing ideas they are perfectly capable of engaging with – due to overly flouncy, poor writing. Being incomprehensible shouldn't be the aim of any writer, and writers shouldn't target their work to an audience of fellow academics; instead, they should lay their ideas out simply, so as to ensure everyone can engage with and challenge them. Thinkers must focus on making their writing accessible to anyone with an interest in the subject matter – not just the elite.

Decisions inside colleges profoundly impact students. They must be pushed to evolve.

Individual colleges, as well as the University, should be placed under public pressure

Olivia Emily

I love my college. Actually, I think my college is the best college. The grounds, the colours, the bar, even the Plodge. But everyone I know in Cambridge will say the same things about their college – we all feel an unconquerable amount of pride. We all race to check whether our college has come up decently in Camfess rankings, argue with our out-of-college friends about the benefits of our own, and hype every redeeming quality up ten-fold on open days to prospective students.

Although my criticisms of the University often overshadow the issues I have on a college-level, it sometimes feels wrong to be so proud of my college when Cambridge is so flawed – in access, in student support and in its attitude towards the environment.

Sometimes, it feels false to tell students to pick a college that still asks bursary recipients to send thank you cards, and has indirect investments in unethical corporations. Only last year, *Varsity* revealed that seven colleges still had a total of £20.7m invested in companies engaged in oil and gas exploration, production and refining.

When bragging about how rich our colleges are, it's sobering to remember that their money isn't always being used for

good. Instead, the competitive Cambridge culture that affects so many students is often literally encouraged by colleges that still offer monetary rewards and higher places in room ballots in exchange for exceptionally good grades. This can have serious consequences on wellbeing, but we can feel bad asking for help because everyone else seems to also just be staying afloat. In a survey conducted by Eliane Thoma-Stemmet for *Varsity* earlier this year, 89% of students interviewed said that they had experienced feelings of imposter syndrome at the University. This is an adage to the feelings of inadequacy that seem so widespread at Cambridge, perhaps because of the intensity, the workload, and the endless comparison to other students. Much of the time, we criticise University-wide institutions like the University Counselling Service (UCS), forgetting that our colleges could – and should – be doing more to help their students on a college-level.

Often, in fact, we can create change most effectively by rallying our colleges. We rightly criticise the toxic environment Cambridge's competitive culture often cultivates – it is, indeed, absolutely ridiculous that some of the country's supposedly brightest students don't feel at home in a room full of similarly clever people

“Often, we can create change most effectively by rallying our colleges”

– but we would do well to draw our focus to changes at the collegiate level.

Indeed, there are an increasing number of things to be proud of on this level. Many colleges, often under pressure from their students, are finally making beneficial changes. Various colleges have committed to divestment in some form. My college, Jesus, recently did the same – most likely in response to the student-run Jesus Divestment Campaign set up earlier in the year. We also just welcomed our new master, Sonita Alleyne, who is the first black person, and the first woman of colour, to be appointed head of an Oxbridge college.

But for many students, it can be a struggle to feel at home in their college, and where you are admitted can have a significant impact on this. The traditions, varying across colleges, can feel stuffy, especially to those from under-represented backgrounds. This year, 68% of incoming freshers to the University are from state schools, a figure that is increasing slowly but steadily, year on year.

To echo the University, this is “deeply encouraging” – it is something to be proud of. However, this varies largely across colleges. For example, St John's saw the lowest state school intake in the 2017 admissions cycle – with only 48.6%

of students admitted coming from state schools – and Churchill saw the highest, at 76.5%. These differences persist in terms of academics. Supervisions are largely organised by college, which results in big variations – when your reading list is full of men, as a woman you can often find it hard to feel as though you belong.

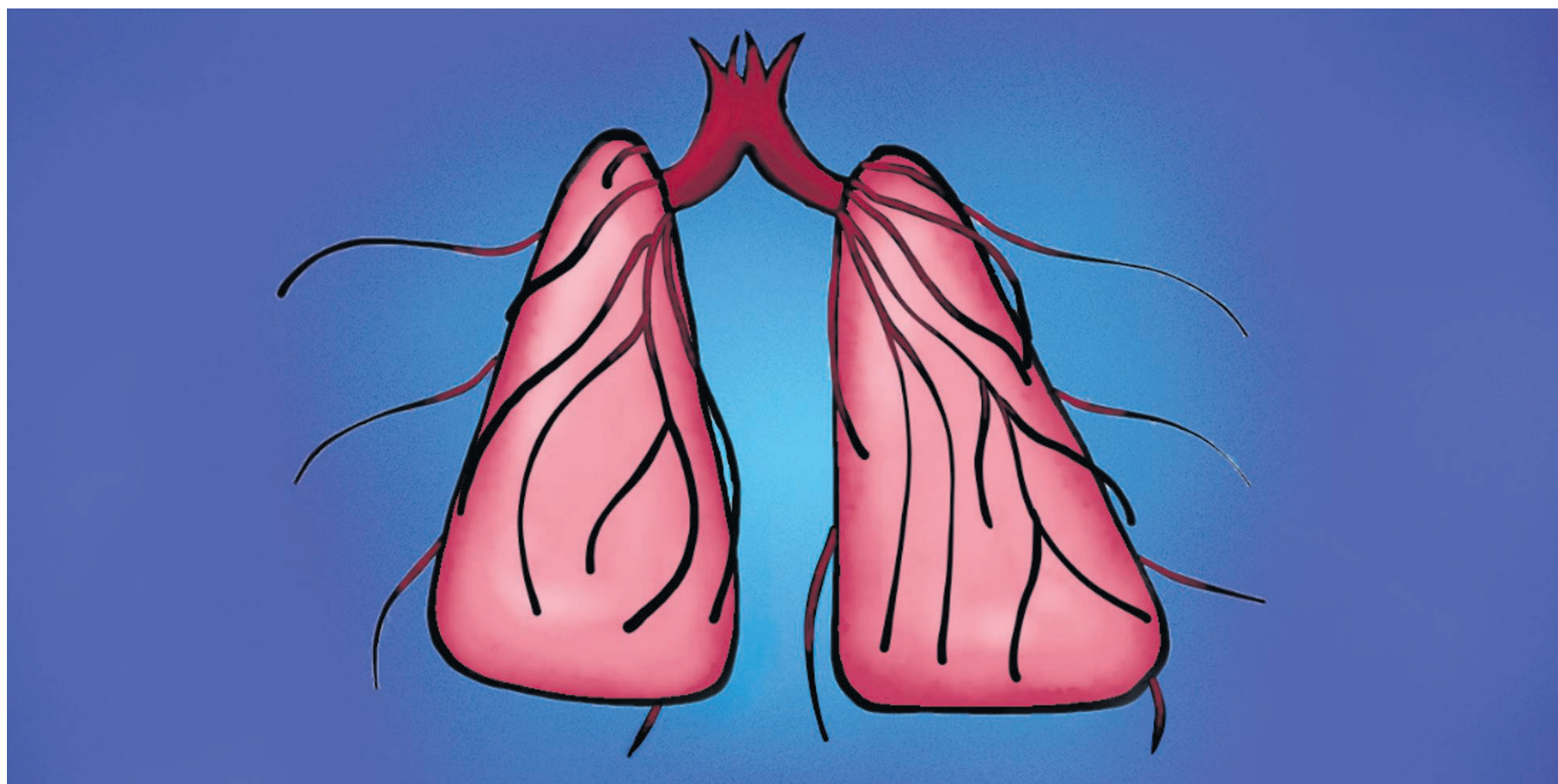
It's a different kind of imposter syndrome, but imposter syndrome all the same, and we criticise the lofty University for making us feel this way, when in reality some of the most impactful changes are made on a college level. Indeed, when we live, eat and sleep in colleges, it is their responsibility to make us feel at home.

Sometimes it feels like Oxbridge, though supposedly full of the nation's brightest minds and future leaders, is decades behind the rest of the country. Sonita Alleyne shouldn't be the first black head of an Oxbridge college – that should have happened years ago.

There's a lot wrong with Cambridge. Your experience is defined, often more so than any other factor, by the college you attend. With more applications being made to Cambridge every year, now is the perfect time to be making changes. And it finally feels like, to some extent – and even if the University isn't – some colleges might be starting to listen.

Science

Drug-resistant tuberculosis, the small bacterium that could make a big comeback



*Tuberculosis cases with single drug resistance are on the rise in the UK, writes **Judith Zarebski***

If you have lived in the UK for your entire life, chances are you've never really worried about tuberculosis. You probably did not even get vaccinated against it, and mostly heard about it only in *Crime and Punishment*, *Jane Eyre* or other literary classics. A disease widespread in the UK during the industrial revolution, single-drug tuberculosis has now made a slight comeback in the UK after years largely absent from the news.

So what is it? From the moment *Mycobacterium tuberculosis* gets inside the lungs, it invades the macrophages and hijacks them to hide from the rest of the immune system. Once it has proliferated enough or the immune system has been compromised, it comes out of hiding. It then leads to a wide array of symptoms, chronic cough, night sweats and weight loss are the most well-known, but TB can also infect many other organs.

Tuberculosis (TB) is a prevalent disease in low and middle income countries, registering 95% of active cases. There are several reasons for this. Over-

crowding, problems with sanitation and poor ventilation, as is often the case in poorer areas, greatly increase the risk of transmitting the bacteria. Once the bacterium is inhaled, resulting malnutrition and a weakened immune system makes it harder for the body to fight the bacteria.

Should we be worried about a small increase in cases of tuberculosis in the UK? Yes and no. After all, the UK management of TB involves a 6 months multidrug regimen, proven to be very efficient for citizens who have contracted it, for instance, on holidays in at-risk countries. The answer is a four-letter acronym: DR-TB, or drug-resistant tuberculosis.

This term encompasses many types of *M. tuberculosis* strains that have developed immunity to the drugs used to treat it. This can be due to several factors, such as a treatment given for the wrong length of time, poor quality of the drug given, or the early termination of the treatment by the patient. The bacteria are therefore not eradicated and can now develop resistance to the treatment if it were to be administered again. These strains are now present in the UK, with dozens of cases as of 2019.

Managing drug-resistant tuberculosis is far more complex and requires a

team of professionals to monitor and manage the infection, to prevent it from becoming even more resistant.

The new treatment now takes between 9 and 20 months. This intensive regimen is far less effective than the usual one, with only 35% of patients responding positively to the treatment. The remaining 65% either stop the treatment, do not respond to it, or die. What can be done to prevent it?

The NHS offers vaccines to healthcare professionals and individuals likely to come in contact with someone from a country where tuberculosis is prevalent. However, this vaccine is far from truly effective. It reduces the risk of infection by just 20%, far from the impact of other common vaccines, such as the MMR vaccine, which is found to be 97% effective against rubella.

This is due to a late response by the immune system, around 12 days, which gives plenty of time for the bacteria to spread and avoid total destruction by the immune system. Due to the nature of the bacterium, designing a more successful vaccine appears to be complicated, and scientists have focused mostly on developing new drugs to cure existing cases of tuberculosis instead of trying to prevent it.

Several researchers at the University

▲ **Illustration by Emily Senior for Varsity**

of Cambridge are currently involved in drug discovery, and Cambridge seems to be on the path towards finding a new drug targeting *M. tuberculosis*.

Research by the Abell Group, in Cambridge's Department of Chemistry, is experimenting with ways to inhibit key enzymes in the drug-resistant strain. This approach, which attempts to disrupt protein enzyme interactions, could also have implications for cancer research and treatment, that interfere in certain protein-protein interactions.

Despite the creation of new innovative drugs, tuberculosis is still a pandemic with fateful consequences. The bacterium is becoming resistant to new drugs, and the creation of further new drugs is merely a band-aid on a very serious issue.

The best solution would be to fully monitor the treatment in patients suffering from tuberculosis and make sure that they follow the treatment to completion, in order to prevent the development of drug resistance by the bacterium.

On a larger scale, informing populations about the importance of finishing the treatment might be the most cost-effective solution to ensure that the disease exists only in memory, and in the pages of our literary classics.

“The new treatment now takes between 9 and 20 months”

“The creation of further new drugs is merely a band-aid on a very serious issue”

Science

Honouring LGBT+ voices in Cambridge's museums

Jess Sharpe
visits Cambridge
museums' 'remixed'
exhibitions

In September, the doors of five of Cambridge's museums – including two museums with scientific collections – were opened for a group of 25 student, staff and volunteer contributors to 'remix' their collections. Following the success of the 2018 Museum Remix event, which centred around the experiences of BME researchers and subjects, this year's event followed institutions across the UK in showcasing LGBT+ stories. 'Remixing' art and history museums which focus on creativity and personal experience is perhaps an easier task. In contrast, how can you 'remix' a collection of scientific instruments or specimens?

While gender and sexuality are discussed in some form within the walls of many museums, scientific collections often seek to present the truth and certainty of scientific discoveries, not the personal lives of practitioners or the variety of experiences embodied by each object. Yet, silencing conversations about sexuality and gender means also silencing critical discussions of power and discrimination. No museums are neutral spaces.

For a head start on the daunting task of 'remixing' just a fraction of the University's five million artefacts, Bridging Binaries volunteer guides led tours of each participating museum.

At the Polar Museum, the tour guide came to a halt opposite a display case holding two penguins and recounted the experience of a polar explorer and his observations of penguin behaviour. He noticed two penguins mating, dismounting, swapping positions and mating again, and came to the conclusion that they were displaying homosexual behaviour. In response, he recorded this section of his field notes only in Ancient Greek.

Museums are spaces where we can uncover and rediscover stories that have been suppressed due to their exclusion from expected norms. They allow us space to recognise that scientific work will always embody these norms. The veil of truth, accuracy and validity held over 'science', in museums and practice, can obstruct diverse, evidence-based research. Instead these experiences need to be reframed as essential and integrated into the body of scientific knowledge.

The challenges of achieving this were reflected in the temporary exhibition curated by the end of the Museum Remix event. The Polar Museum and Zoology Museum displays grappling with broad thematic ideas of how we view the relationship between science and identity.

The Zoology Museum 'remixed' display was based around the quote from the University of Bath sociologist Eric Anderson, "Animals don't do sexual identity, they just do sex". The team considered what we can learn about



ideas of gender, sex and sexual identity through zoological study, and why this is important.

They compared the sexual behaviours of penguins, bonobos and humans to reveal our shared similarities, and to ultimately reflect on what the animal kingdom can show us about how we categorise ourselves based on sexual identity.

The temporary exhibition also featured objects from the Polar Museum, with a display seeking to demonstrate the inextricable nature of decolonising science and museums, 'queer' as an intersectional lens, and climate justice.

The Polar Museum is an active site of research, with a focus on polar environment, glaciology and climate change, alongside the study of the culture and societies of the Arctic. An Ammassalik carved wooden map displayed alongside coloured labels revealing different aspects of its story and noting how the landscape this object once represented is now widely different, due to melting ice. This object therefore provides key evidence of the value of the experience of climate witnesses, who experience climate change first-hand.

Capturing this knowledge requires centring, respecting and understanding identity through a variety of lenses and perspectives.

As another example of the value of exploring this 'queer' lens on science, consider the research around the search for a 'gay gene'. How many of these studies consider the existence of a spectrum of LGBT+ experience beyond 'gay'? Or,

what about the experiences of those who fall outside expected categories of sexuality, who may slip through the gaps in, for example, accessing sexual health treatment?

Attempting to simplify these questions does more than exclude personal experiences: it directly limits the power of scientific knowledge able to be produced through this inquiry.

The experiences of those outside a white, straight, cisgender and middle-class norm must be integrated into museum spaces in order to represent those long excluded, to produce truly valid research drawing on all relevant experiences, and to widen the accessibility of museums beyond those who already feel comfortable in such spaces. LGBT+ experiences are just one element of this, and can provide a lens to these broader perspectives. Science museums are critical spaces for these changes.

Here in Cambridge, some of these shifts are already starting to take place, with volunteer-led tours and live action games starting to rewrite the shape and place of science museums.

In the new year, the Bridging Binaries tours will expand to the Whipple Museum of the History of Science and the Sedgwick Museum of Earth Sciences. Operation Survival, a live game where one seeks to help humanity survive the challenges facing our environment, also currently runs across four museums, including the Sedgwick Museum, Polar Museum and Zoology Museum. Watch out for any future pop-ups of the LGBT+ Museum Remix exhibition.

▲ **Students, staff and volunteers 'remixed' items from across the University's collections** (CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY MUSEUMS)



Varsity explains

Who won this year's Nobel Prize in Medicine?

This week, the Nobel Prize in Physiology or Medicine was jointly awarded to Sir Peter Ratcliffe, William Kaelin Jr, and Gregg Semenza, for their work on how cells sense and respond to fluctuations in oxygen availability. One of the recipients, Sir Peter Ratcliffe, read medicine at Gonville & Caius.

A few minutes without oxygen and things go downhill very quickly. Mitochondria in our cells use oxygen to allow for the large-scale production of ATP from food and our energy reserves, something all eukaryotes have in common.

Oxygen sensing is important for regulation of erythropoietin, a hormone which stimulates the production of red blood cells (which bind and transport oxygen to tissues).

One of the early results from this group of scientists, was precisely how oxygen is able to control the production of EPO at a molecular level.

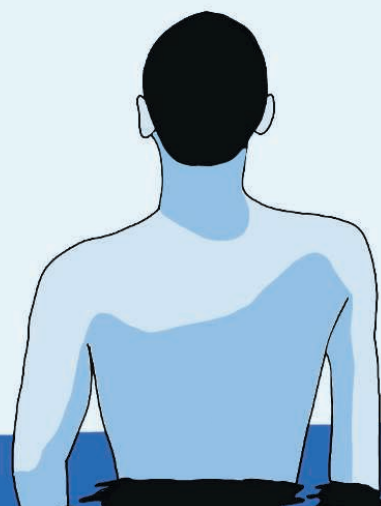
When oxygen levels drop, a transcription factor (essentially a protein complex) called hypoxia-inducible factor (HIF), binds the DNA segment next to the EPO gene, and increases its production. This means that when oxygen levels are low, this helps us produce more red blood cells, useful if you want to climb Everest, and long exploited by athletes training at high altitudes.

They then discovered that this particular mechanism was actually active in numerous cell types, and is a highly conserved gene transcription programme. When cells have high oxygen levels, there are low levels of HIF-1 α , as oxygen directs its active degradation. Yet when oxygen levels in the cell drop, this degradation is inhibited, and HIF can accumulate and bind to its targets in the nucleus. The exact mechanics of how degradation occurs, is inhibited, and regulated, comprised a majority of this group's research, and is a fundamental contribution to biology.

Now, you might think this only of use to those wanting to win the Olympics, but hypoxia signalling is critical in a number of physiological and disease processes, ranging from exercise, fetal development, to renal failure and cancer progression. The wide range of processes that are impacted by hypoxia signalling also means that we may be able to use this to fight against a number of diseases - or to finally climb that mountain.

“
No
museums
are neutral
spaces
”

Vulture



► **LIFESTYLE**
GOING VEGETARIAN TO SAVE
THE PLANET • 22
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THE CHALLENGES FACED BY
BLACK MUSICIANS • 28-29

Illustration by Lisha Zhong

Lifestyle

Vegetarianism, the planet & me

In her first column on making lifestyle changes in the face of the climate crisis, **Jess Molyneux** discusses adjusting to a vegetarian diet, both at home and in Cambridge

Nobody ever seems to know what I'm talking about when I say, with a sigh of wistful nostalgia, 'Billy Bear meat'. Available from the deli counter in all good Manchester supermarkets, this sliced sandwich meat in the shape of a bear's face (with pop-able eyes!) kept my sister and I placated for hours of weekend food shops.

From munching this questionable delicacy to routinely ordering meat feast calzones, I was definitely a childhood carnivore. Later, getting more nutrition-conscious, the red meat craving was quelled, but my mum's chicken curry or turkey burgers still took top spot. Family teas were meat and two veg, with the occasional experimental venture of cheese or Quorn.

I can't place the turning point precisely; university didn't convert me immediately, but I pretty quickly found myself opting for the vegetarian option in caff as default. Only my dislike of absolute rules (what if, just one time, I really wanted chicken?) was holding me back.

Until, that is, my identical twin sister tried the six-week veggie pledge, succeeded, and

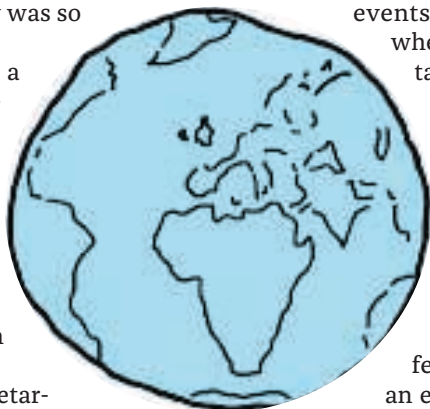
“
The ease of going meat-free
at Cambridge made my
transition smooth
”

decided to carry it on into the new year. Well, I couldn't very well let her win on ethics, so vegetarian for 2019 it was. One goodbye Christmas dinner, and we were off. Who knew twin rivalry was so good for the environment.

So far, I've been having a ball. My tendency to obsess and stress over choice evaporates when there are only two options on a menu. The ease of going meat-free at Cambridge, too, made my transition smooth, and luckily my parents are happy to get on board back home.

But I know I'm in a vegetarian bubble: this summer, with a group of friends who are all uni-bound, all concerned about the climate crisis, I was shocked to find myself the only vegetarian when we arrived at Edinburgh's best hog roast establishment. My sneaking suspicion is that most of them will go more, if not fully, meat-free at uni.

There's something about the university environment where conversations are constantly taking place (in hall, at speaker



▲ “I fluctuate between thinking that we're on the way and feeling that I must be in an echo chamber.” (ILLUSTRATION BY BELLA BIDDLE FOR VARSITY)

events, in college societies), where there are more vegetarians and vegans around than I'd ever met before, where almost everyone is of the right age to feel that the future of the planet depends on them.

But I fluctuate between thinking that we're on the way and feeling that I must be in an echo chamber. My whole household has changed; I see many friends following suit; there are veggie Prets in London and, now, in Manchester. But I also see major opposition to proposed meat-free Mondays in college hall, and blank faces, or chuckling dismissal, when I explain that I'm an environmental vegetarian. Given the necessity of collective action for dietary solutions to have any

▲ (ILLUSTRATION BY LOIS WRIGHT FOR VARSITY)

real impact, it's demoralising to realise that environment-friendly eating is still a minority movement.

Then there's the pressure from the other side, the feeling that you haven't gone far enough, that you should cut dairy too, campaign about food waste, buy more locally, or eat everything raw.

“
I'll probably try veganism,
but it'll take a while to
wean myself off halloumi
”

I'll probably try going vegan, but it'll take a while to wean myself off halloumi. There's a temptation to measure your own impact by the metric of comparison to those around you – but with the medley of options between religious vegan and dedicated carni-

vore there's as little use trying to gain the moral high ground over friends and family as there is beating yourself up about not doing more. What anyone who's at least listened to a TED talk on the environment knows is that we need everyone to make fifty, sixty, seventy percent of the effort, rather than an ordained few going all the way.

I'm learning to accept that there's always more I can do, and also that it's no good shouting at people who don't feel climate responsibility pressing upon them yet.

My climate-consciousness conversion was accelerated by the environment I was lucky enough to be in, and rather than get angry or demotivated, the best we can do is stick to our own resolutions for small-scale change, and contribute to the pro-environment discourse with information and encouragement wherever possible.

Happily, I don't miss Billy Bear meat all that much, and even Nando's isn't a struggle anymore. As long as we have sweet potato fries on the side of the environment, I think there's hope.





Pause, and bring yourself back to the present

Mindfulness is more than a buzzword – at its core it is about being completely in the present moment and bringing awareness to our bodies, explains **Charlotte Newman**

When was the last time any of us truly stopped? As a student at Cambridge, with all the workloads and expectations placed within the system and perpetuated by it, it can sometimes seem like an impossible task to simply stop and be here with ourselves in the present moment.

Truly stopping is not the same as a relaxing 'distraction' such as watching something on Netflix or scrolling through social media – or even reading a book. Truly stopping and being still is incredibly difficult.

“
Truly stopping isn't the same as a relaxing 'distraction'
”

Mindfulness can help us be still. It is a word that has become mainstream, the go-to phrase and solution for life's stresses and problems. However, many of these adaptations of the principles of mindfulness (such as the countless quick-fix advice books and physical anti-stress exercises) can miss the point, as they attempt to alleviate our stresses without ever allowing us to understand the root causes of our stresses and suffering.

The Western approach to 'mindfulness' can be superficial and has become commercialized

as a 'fix all', that can solve our stresses without ever really looking at the true causes within our environments and ourselves. Often these commercialised methods avoid confronting the self and the understanding that internal stillness and reflection can provide us with the answers we seek.

At a time when there is so much negativity on social media and in the news, I hope to offer a small piece of calm, and an alternative to the mainstream consensus of how we should carry out our day-to-day lives.

What I write about is nothing new, the principles and messages have been passed down for thousands of years and I still have much to learn, but I hope to offer some insight into some teachings that may be useful to others and may inspire you to start a journey of discovery within yourself.

The principles of mindfulness originate from Buddhism. At its core, mindfulness is about being completely in the present moment bringing our awareness back to ourselves and our bodies.

Mindfulness is about bringing our awareness back to our bodies in the present moment and recognising the present is all that we have. How often when eating something does our mind think about our next essay, a deadline, some coursework or the latest trouble in the news?

Our minds are constantly moving, constantly consuming and turning over information so that often we are never actually present in the here and now. At Cambridge, the problem is exacerbated by the high workloads and preconceived notions of what people believe they 'should' be doing here.

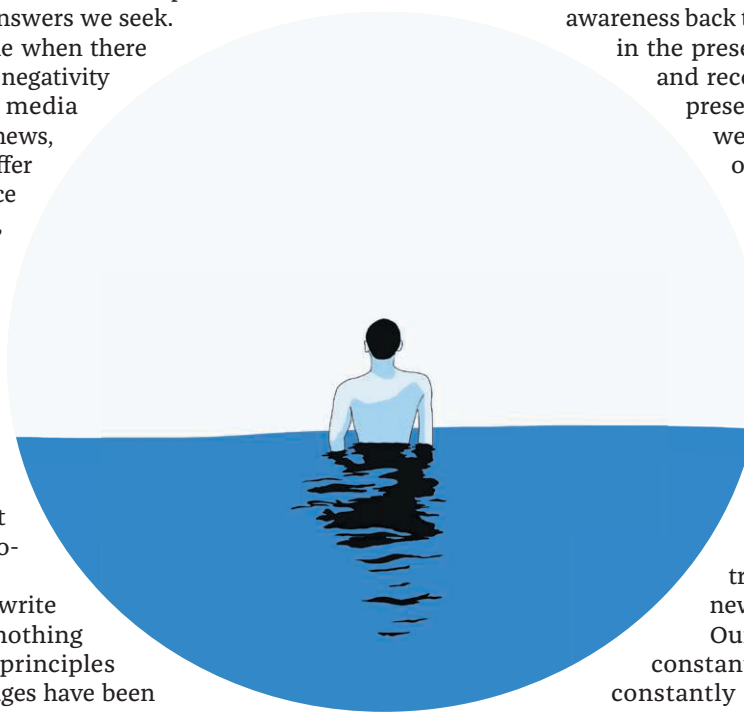
Recognising that we are thinking is the first step to practicing being in the now, in the present moment. Eckhart Tolle's book *Practicing the Power of Now* addresses practically how to start living in the moment.

“
Our minds are constantly moving, constantly consuming and turning over new information
”

It all begins with coming back to our bodies through observing our thoughts and focusing on breathing. The five senses are useful in bringing us into the now and out of our thoughts. This can be as simple as being aware of the sound of bird song, or feeling the wind against your skin – is it warm? Is it cold? When you eat a snack become aware of the taste, the sensations in your mouth, if it is hot or cold, spicy or sweet. It may feel unnatural at first to try but this reconnection with ourselves opens the way for dealing with the difficult emotions and feelings of worry that can arise in our busy lives.

◀ “Mindfulness can help us be still”

(ILLUSTRATION BY LISHA ZHONG FOR VARSITY)



Connection has never been easier — so why is dating this hard?

Laura Curtis delves into the tricky dynamics of relationships built through our screens

Theoretically, dating has never been easier. The swipe-right world that we live in means we can secure a Saturday night date by effectively just twiddling our thumbs. A selection of flattering photos showcase a smiley individual with an active social life, while in reality The Swiper often vegetates alone on the couch, staring down at a phone from an expressionless face balanced on several chins. Hook-up apps have given us the power to convince people we're sexy without even getting out of our PJs. I'm calling this a win, right? Well, perhaps not. The technology which makes it so easy to meet people can actually make resulting interactions all the more difficult. Both Tinder and texting are riddled with complications, such that they might hinder romance just as much as they facilitate it.

In fact, it is this very ease of online interactions that can undermine them: there are 50 million of us on Tinder, with 12 billion swipes per day – we are all infinitely replaceable. When one match is no longer quite ticking

all the boxes, an army of right-swipers are waiting in reserve to fill their place. This on-tap quality of dating apps has the potential to make us act carelessly and callously with regard to our interactions.

“
When one match doesn't tick all the boxes, an army of right-swipers wait to fill their place
”

Perhaps we feel the need to scrutinise our text messages due to their inherent ambiguity. Texts are so easily misconstrued; without body language or tone of voice, a simple “okay” could be read as angry, excited, or apathetic. The number of kisses at the end of

a text, goodnight messages or lack thereof, emojis, and length of time to reply are all clues used to decode the meaning of the mysterious words. These replace the traditional aforementioned codifiers of language, tone of voice and gestures, which are so blatantly lacking in what has potentially become our primary channel of communication. Shockingly, these pointers are far from fail safe, and end up sending us round in circles rather than guiding us through the fog.

Possibly the scariest aspect of our online relationships is the loophole they create for the less emotionally available among us. You can, literally, keep someone at arm's length by conducting a relationship largely through text, thereby avoiding all the 'scary stuff': commitment, rejection, effort. I spoke to someone online everyday for 4 months before we finally found ourselves in the same

city, met up, and things were over after the first encounter. Was it too real? Was it too much like hard work? Whichever the answer, there undoubtedly appears to be a growing trend of apathy among young people towards real-life relationships. If you conduct your relationships the virtual way for too long, can the real way become too scary, and entail too much effort? Online interaction can

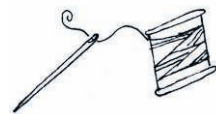
of course be beneficial: it facilitates and encourages communication, can make long distance bearable, and eases the stress of making plans and meeting up. Used as an additional dimension to relationships, rather than a replacement of face-to-face interaction, the internet can have an enriching potential. So type, Skype, and swipe away. Just don't swipe away reality in the process.

◀ “Can the real way be too scary?”

(ILLUSTRATION BY BELLA BIDDLE)



Fashion



Reinventing a narrative through costume and nudity in Dada Masilo's Giselle

Anastasia Kolomiets explores the transformative power of costume, and the lack thereof, in this classical ballet's reinvention

Fashion doesn't only have the function of dressing us in our day-to-day lives. It has the power of visually changing the body, and a lot can be told through the way fashion is used. Performance-based art forms frequently use costume to enhance the messages they put across, as it provides another, distinctly visual layer to what's happening overall. Dada Masilo's *Giselle* does that brilliantly.

Masilo's production is raw and visceral. The South African choreographer, who also dances the main part, reinvented this traditional ballet and made it contemporary. Apart from formal innovations, such as combining classical dance moves with contemporary ones and traditional Tswana dance, Masilo paid attention to how the ballet can be changed visually; not just through how the body moves, but also through what adorns the body, or doesn't. Nudity and unconventional costume helped Masilo tell the story. *Giselle* is a story of love and betrayal, but is traditionally emotionally muted and idealised through formal mechanisms. The heroine, *Giselle*, falls in love with Albrecht, who deceives her, and when the deceit is revealed she dies of heartbreak. Masilo's *Giselle* is a young South African girl, and through the incorporation of traditional

Tswana dance moves, as well as making the leader of the Wilis a Sangoma (a traditional healer), Masilo transforms the ballet's original context. She even worked with the South African composer Philip Miller to rewrite Adolphe Adam's score.

The second act moves into the land of the spirits, where *Giselle* is summoned from her grave by the Wilis – vengeful ghosts of women who were also betrayed by their lovers. They seek revenge on the ones who wronged them

“Masilo paid attention not simply to how the body moves, but to what adorns it, and what does not

by killing them. In the original, the Wilis wear white tulle, a colour traditionally associated with purity and innocence. Masilo, however, dresses her Wilis in red, as she wanted them to look “as if they were drenched in blood”. Their violence is shown not only in their powerful movements, but also on their bodies. This is, as Masilo says, a tale with “no forgiveness”.

Masilo also undermines the original's heteronormativity – there are male Wilis too. They wear the same dresses as the female Wilis, while their leader Myrtha is performed by a man. This disrupts the classical narrative, which seeks to assign *Giselle* a traditionally feminine role of a loving, forgiving and soft character, an embodiment of the expected values of femininity at the time.

The costume subverts the validity of binary gender distinctions,



▲ Dada Masilo's *Giselle* (SADLER_WELLS/INSTAGRAM)

breaking the female versus male opposition so prominent in the classical ballet. Masilo also focused on the body and lack of clothing in her production. When *Giselle* reaches puberty, her mother opens her top to reveal her breasts, introducing a South African ritual into the narrative.

“The costumes subvert the female versus male opposition so prominent in the classical ballet

the village dwellers find out about *Giselle*'s intimacy with Albrecht, they disrobe her in a degrading and disconcerting act of “slut-shaming”. The naked body is on the stage, but the audience is shocked not by the nudity but by the unkindness of the people. Once everyone abandons her, *Giselle* continues to dance only in her underpants until she fades and dies, showcasing the purity of the nude body, and how the body should not be a social taboo.

Masilo is saying that the body is not something that is wrong, what is wrong is people's attitude to it, which is a fashion statement in itself. Dada Masilo's updated *Giselle* is a beautiful and powerful production, with raw and real emotions.

This power certainly rests in Masilo's amazing abilities of storytelling through dance, but is also enriched by what the dancers' bodies are (not) wearing.

Nudity in *Giselle* does not stop there. When



▼ Dada Masilo's *Giselle* (SADLER_WELLS/INSTAGRAM)



Arts

Can art make us healthy?

Joanna Neve explores the potential positive impact of art on our health and wellbeing



▲ The art displays "lightened the hospital corridors a bit" (ILLUSTRATION BY YAN SHI FOR VARSITY)

Art has long been suspected to play a role in both our mental and our physical health. The Cambridge-shire-based charity Arts and Minds, for example, organises artist-led workshops, and cites evidence to support the value of its work on its website, noting that in previous participant surveys, 76% of respondents reported an increase in wellbeing. And though with a different group in mind, this year's Cambridge Festival of Ideas will feature a talk on using art in prisons as a form of rehabilitation. But what about using hospitals as an artistic venue to display pieces? Perhaps this could improve health and well-being too.

When staying in hospital or visiting relatives, walking the sad and seemingly endless clinical halls can soon become a miserable and pessimistic chore. That's why Broomfield Hospital in Essex decided to start an art project, lining the corridors with photography, prints, drawings, etchings and paintings. In doing so, they hoped to "reduce stress, speed up recovery and aid the healing process" of their patients. The rumoured £400,000-plus investment didn't please everyone, though. One critic remarked: "If people donate artwork for free then fair enough, but that money should have been spent on things that really help sick people – nurses, cleaners, equipment and drugs."

So I felt guilty that, for quite a while, I didn't even notice the artwork around me at Broomfield when I went regularly to visit my grandad this summer. As soon as I did though, the coffee run became a pleasant experience: I was captivated, peering down each corridor to see what type of work they might have on display. Even in the most unusual of places,

I would begin to spot pieces I hadn't noticed before.

When in a bit of a rush, for example, you might walk past the striking mechanical structure printed on one of the ground-floor walls. Why on earth is that crane there? The question bugged me as I queued in line at Costa. Then I read the accompanying plaque. The piece was by Simon Ryder, and attempted to link coastal structures to hospital patients: "If you imagine the atrium space between the old and new hospitals as the Thames Estuary, then outpatients can be seen as the coastline of Essex, with its four entrances, network of corridors and waiting areas taking the place of estuaries, rivers, channels and lagoons."

His tenuous link didn't do much for me, but I nonetheless found the project an interesting one. Carol Farrow had some unique looking abstract paintings in one of the ground-floor waiting rooms, and when I was heading back up to the second floor, I noticed some minuscule etchings by the lift. Also by Simon Ryder, the small pieces were Perspex postcards featuring sketches inspired by his coastal journeys.

While I could understand the frustration of previous critics, I wasn't too sure how I felt about the Broomfield art project. Sure, when they bought the pieces in 2010, the alleged £400,000-plus cost was a lot to spend. This summer, my grandad's MRI scan came around a week later than normal after one of Broomfield's expensive machines broke. Could that money have been saved for eventualities like this? I'm not sure.

But what I do know is that the project lightened the corridors a bit, and that initiatives like this give patients something to

admire as they navigate the often sad urban jungles of UK hospitals.

Furthermore, research has shown that art activities can play a key role in easing loneliness and supporting those with depression. Although exhibiting art in hospitals may have its downsides, it definitely channels this increasingly-accepted ideal of artistic experience as a form of recovery.

It seems to me that, with time, recuperation procedures will begin to incorporate more and more art programmes, such as those organised by the charity Arts and Minds. Many people and professionals are beginning to recognise the role of art in health, even as some remain sceptical.

Perhaps we'll even see more art on the walls of Addenbrooke's soon enough.

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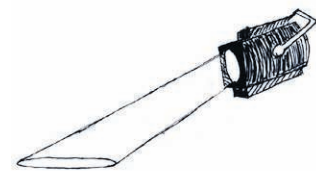
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Theatre



Tips on taking centre stage in Cambridge

Are you keen to get involved in Cambridge's exciting theatre scene? CUADC's **Lucy Tiller** has all the information from the city's largest theatre and its resident dramatic society

Whether you've been on stage since you could walk or have never stepped foot inside a dressing room, if you're interested in getting involved in theatre, Cambridge is the right place to be. With over 40 shows entirely run by students every term, the Cambridge stage is varied, vibrant and shaped by students, and there's always something to match your interests and availability. The community is welcoming, warm and large, and ranges from actors to production team, front of house to technicians. This is the perfect place to try out something new and exciting in the theatre.

As publicist of the Cambridge University Amateur Dramatic Club (CUADC), my role is to work with the rest of the committee and ADC Theatre management to support the shows we have chosen to fund, and more generally to help people get involved in theatre in Cambridge. So, what can you get involved in, and how?

The theatre scene at Cambridge can seem complicated, with so many different organisations, venues and roles available. Instead of having a single theatrical society, Cambridge has many. Most of these organisations function as funding bodies – they provide money and support to directors and producers who apply directly to them and build their own



▲ *Orlando* at the Corpus Playroom in Lent 2019 (WILF RAKE)

company – rather than maintaining a permanent company who take part in every show.

Several colleges run a theatrical society, like the Pembroke Players (Pembroke) and Fletcher Players (Corpus Christi). There are also larger societies operating between colleges: CUADC is the largest and oldest, and is a resident company at the ADC Theatre, on Park Street, which is the biggest venue in

Cambridge. Other regular venues include the Corpus Playroom (owned by Corpus Christi and managed by the ADC), the Fitzpatrick Hall in Queens' College, and the Robinson Auditorium, although there are many more all over the city.

If you want to put on a show in Cambridge, applications open midway through the term before. You can apply as a producer, director or actor, and if you're pitching for the ADC or Corpus Playroom, you'll be interviewed by an applications panel. If they like your pitch, you'll be assigned a slot for the next term! You can then apply to the theatre societies for funding.

If you're interested in getting involved in acting, or want to apply to work on a show as a technician, creative or production role, then Camdram is the place to look. This is a website which lists all of the opportunities currently open, how to sign up for an audition or how to apply, and some contact details if you want to get in touch with the organisers.

The Cambridge stage is varied, vibrant, and shaped by students

Usually all opportunities plus some other bonus content is posted in the Cambridge Theatre Facebook group, and weekly email lists can be subscribed to through CUADC's website. If it's all a bit daunting, come and

chat to someone in the ADC bar on Freshers' Friday (11th October), or send an email to any of the CUADC committee.

The community is welcoming, warm and large

One way to get involved if you're new to theatre is through CUADC's freshers' plays. These are made up of students new to the theatre scene, freshers or otherwise, with support from the CUADC committee. They run midway through Michaelmas term and are a great way to get started! Applications for production team members will open on Friday 11th October, with auditions and interviews taking place at the ADC Theatre between Wednesday 16th and Sunday 20th October.

Don't worry if you miss them, as there are loads of other ways to get involved – just keep an eye on Camdram, or get in touch.

CUADC, Cambridge University Musical Theatre Society (CUMTS) and the Cambridge Footlights are also running theatre trip socials throughout the term, which are perfect if you want to see some theatre, but you're worried about turning up alone! During the first few weeks of term CUADC and friends from other societies will be running socials for BME students, female and NB technicians and members of the LGBTQ+ community.

▼ *Angels in America*, an ADC main show in Lent 2019 (LUCIA REVEL-CHION)





Film & TV

The Politician might seem over the top, but so is our reality

In this new satire, **Gabriel Humphreys** finds a hilarious show that makes us look, and think, twice

The newest offering from *Pose*, *Feud* and *American Horror Story* creator Ryan Murphy follows the political career and aspirations of Payton Hobart, an affluent Santa Barbara teen set on becoming President of the United States.

It's billed as "a comedy with social commentary", and having seen the trailer, my hopes were, frankly, sky high. Ben Platt had blown audiences away playing the titular role in *Dear Evan Hansen* on Broadway, and the premise of the show felt just right. In a time of increasing political ambition, polarisation and uncertainty, it feels more than ever like time for a healthy dose of medicinal political satire. In the opening minutes, the jokes come thick and fast. We, the audience, are all at once thrust into the world of high school politics. It won't be for everyone – there are intensely surreal moments, and sometimes I wasn't sure whether I should be laughing or not. The world of the wealthy is carefully built, shot by shot. The lingering images of their lustrous California homes, dining tables that seem miles long, and endless pools, stables and country clubs.

The show is littered with political refer-

ences, so much so that the race to be high school president feels like the actual race to be President of the United States, replete with intense and cold-hearted advisors obsessed with polling data. Payton has his perfect high school sweetheart as his would-be First Lady, her costume drawing an immediate and unmistakable comparison with Jackie Kennedy.

Many reviews have condemned the show for being too confused, contrived or convoluted. But what some seem to treat with

disdain, I think we should embrace. Yes, the characters and situations seem unrealistic, pastiche even. So what? All the better, in my opinion.

The plot twists and turns: backstabbing, controversy and betrayal all come knocking at Payton's door, sometimes in frighteningly quick succession. But these extremes are trademarks of analytical satire, and at a time when mass media has never enjoyed so much power and nations face daily political turmoil, such fast-moving events hardly even seem out of the

realms of possibility.

The interplay of the real and created in this series penetrates into the characters' psyches: Payton, for example, performatively cries at the end of *It's A Wonderful Life* only because he feels he ought to.

“

The world of the wealthy is carefully built shot by shot

”

Authenticity and politics are hardly comfortable bedfellows; Payton's main aim in the first episode is acquiring a running mate who will make him seem more genuine. And yet the show continues to prove that the two are utterly incompatible. Political machinations brutally crush personal events.

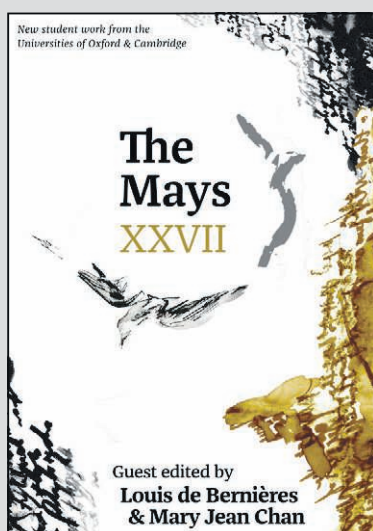
For all its comedy and surreal cynicism, the show reminds us of the dangers of irresponsible politics dominated by personal attacks, underhand tactics and vaulting ambition. Sound familiar?



▲ “A healthy dose of medicinal political satire” (ILLUSTRATION BY SUZANNE LAMBEEK FOR VARSITY)

The Mays 27

A book of the best new student writing and art from the Universities of Oxford and Cambridge.



“I was struck by the variety of the entries, some of which even provoked a pang of envy in me, alongside the admiration. These pieces of work are a pleasure; I am glad that I had the opportunity to read them, and for that I thank The Mays, and wish it a long and creative future.” Louis de Bernières

“As an emerging poet, I found inspiration and companionship in past issues of The Mays. I find myself impressed and heartened by the beauty and lyricism in these pages, and hope you will join me in celebrating the success of these writers.” Mary Jean Chan

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Music

Vulture's

PLAYLIST FOR SETTLING IN

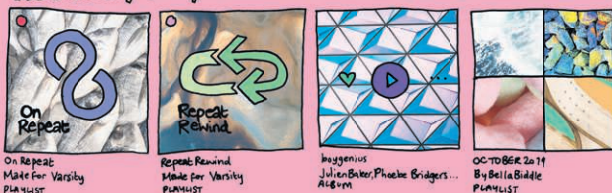
by **Vulture Music**

With the beginning of term just starting, anticipation for the new academic year is high. Whether you're a fresher or a returning Cambridge student, we at Vulture Music have put together a playlist to guide you through the adjustment period that is freshers' week, helping you ease (back) into life at Cambridge and all its quirks.

From chill-out tunes for relaxing after a long day to songs for pres, we've got it all covered!

Recently Played

▼ Illustration by Bella Biddle



Cola

Arlo Parks

"Now I don't really care/ 'Cause you're runnin' round over there." Soulful and honest, Parks' track explores the idea of moving on and is perfect for mellow listening, providing a welcome break from the chaos of adjusting to life in Cambridge.

Free Room

Ravyn Lenae (Ft Appleby)

With smooth lyrics and a beat that you can't help but dance to, listening to *Free Room* is recklessly fun and freeing. While moving to university can feel like a leap into the unknown, funky tunes like this can help you ground yourself!

Lullaby

Barney Artist, Tom Misch

"Overloaded poems in my mind/ fill up all the spirit with the light." Tom Misch's silken tones combine almost magically with Barney Artist's careful lyrics to create a layered and ethereal track.

Lovestained

Hope Tala

Up-and-coming artist Hope Tala's album *Sensitive Soul* is full of gems. *Lovestained* is a tune that is alive and kicking, and will have you listening on repeat. Contemplative yet fun, it's the perfect tune for unpacking your room/ wandering around Cambridge.

Follow us on **Spotify: musicvarsity**

Black pop artists still face obstacles on their way to the top

In the first instalment of his column, **Kwaku Gyasi** explores the barriers that black performers and producers face in breaking into a genre meant for mainstream consumption

Pop culture is often derided as frivolous or meaningless, when its accessibility is precisely what makes it such a useful tool to reflect on our society. That being said, in recent years consumers and creators alike have been more open to discussing the inequalities that are rife in the music industry, with topics like cultural appropriation becoming hot-button issues. Another notable pattern is the myriad of ways in which black popular artists are treated differently by record labels, chart companies, critics and the general public.

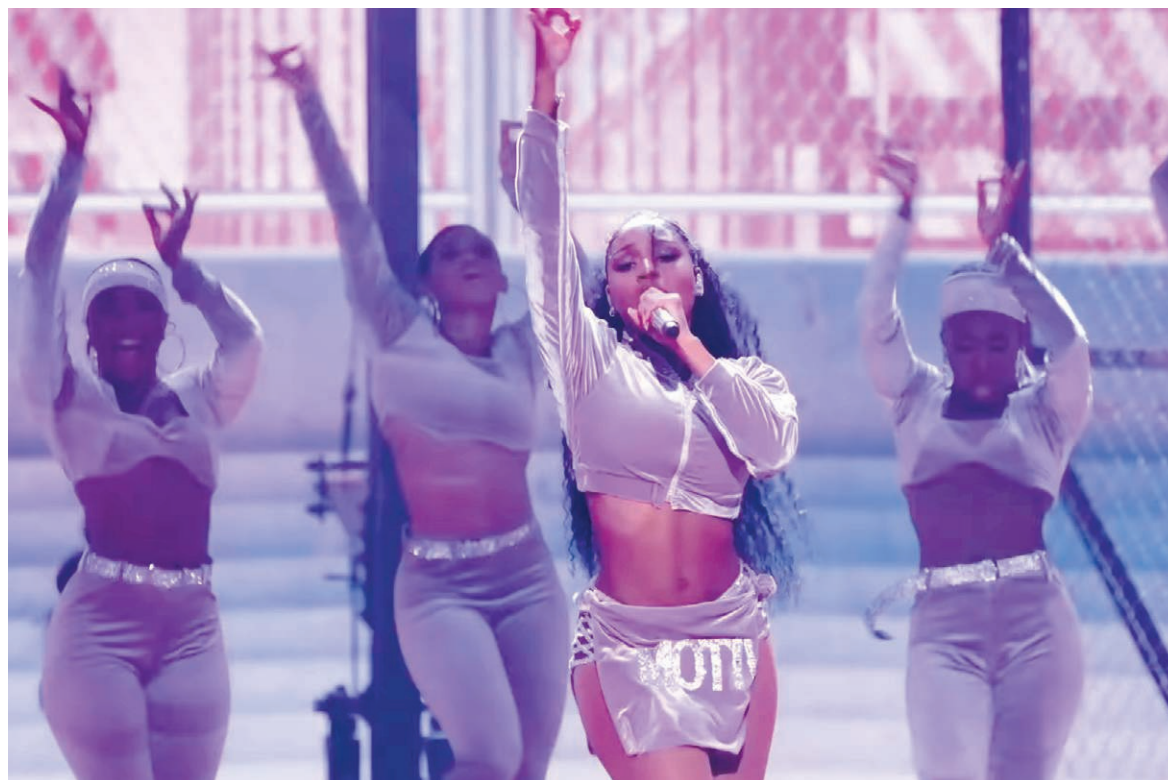
Two decades ago, the barriers which continue to hold back black artists were a lot less visible. Backed by a booming pre-streaming music industry, which could fund futuristic music videos and innovative production, and with R&B reigning supreme as the most popular genre, a generation of black pop stars thrived in the '90s and early 2000s. R&B-leaning pop music had appeal both in the mainstream and on the so-called 'urban' charts, with various performers from that era, such as Beyoncé and Aaliyah, still relevant and influential today. This is perhaps why so many contemporary black artists continue to pay homage to aesthetics and sounds from that era. But, as the '00s came to a close and

EDM (electronic dance music) became the dominant style influencing pop, these starlets faded from the limelight. The strong legacies they left behind ultimately had a negative effect on any artists who had come of age on that 'urban pop' sound and were now trying to break into the mainstream.

In the past two decades, few other black women performers in popular music have been able to thrive without premature and incessant comparisons to Beyoncé or Rihanna. This forces black women into a mould they might not fit into, while also putting singers a few years into their careers on par with seasoned performers, setting impossible expectations.

In 2014, Tinashe had presented herself as a real contender to replace the vacuum left by Rihanna's hiatus from music and Beyoncé's ascension to iconic status. That was, at least, until *Elle Magazine* ran the headline 'Watch Out, Beyoncé, here comes Tinashe', unnecessarily pitting the two against each other and permanently damaging her legacy. In addition to various label missteps which attempted to box her into an outdated niche, this essentially left the now 26-year-old performer's career stalling.

Today, this pattern is being repeated. Nor-



▲ Normani exploded onto the VMAs main stage with her debut single *Motivation* this summer (YOUTUBE/VMAS)



mani, former Fifth Harmony member and budding star, exploded onto the VMAs main stage with her debut single *Motivation* this summer in a clear attempt to vie for the pop crown. But everything from her curated 'perfect' aesthetic to her dance moves has provoked certain fans to label her a Queen Bey copycat. While she, like many of her peers, gushes over Beyoncé and her influence, she has been careful to assert her own artistic identity, noting in an interview on the Zach Sang Show, "I'm excited to see what it is that I have to offer as well."

The reality is that the expectations placed on black popular artists come from all different directions, including from black music fans that want to see themselves represented in popular culture as authentically as possible. As far back as 1988, Whitney Houston was infamously booed at that year's Soul Train Awards for this reason: her pop sound and polished public persona was perceived by black audiences as "not black enough". In fact many performers who reach pop royalty are often accused of selling out or pandering.

Lizzo is the latest of many artists to face this criticism, with her hip-hop style often dubbed 'corny'. Just as Whitney Houston was, Lizzo has been aware of her fanbase's demographic for a while. Recently, she wrote in an Instagram caption: "For so long I felt like my music wasn't reaching black people and it was breakin my

heart." The consistent connection between black genres such as hip-hop and R&B with edginess, brooding and frosty detachment often denies upbeat, peppy and corny music from being considered truly "black", especially because pop music and the aesthetics that accompany it are often considered 'soulless' for these same traits.

Black artists can't seem to win, with the critiques they face always cutting both ways. At the time of writing, Lizzo's hit *Truth Hurts* has spent six weeks at #1 on the Billboard Hot 100, earning it the record as the longest #1 by a female rapper. And yet Lizzo's song is, in fact, quintessentially pop.

“
The expectations placed on black popular artists come from all directions
”

Billboard's categorisation of Lizzo in this way is particularly troubling in an industry in which there are many others who also both sing and rap, but are white, such as Post Malone, and are not bound exclusively by the labels of 'rapper'



▲ Lizzo's hit *Truth Hurts*, at the time of writing, has spent six weeks at #1 (INSTAGRAM/LIZZOBEEATING)

or 'singer'. This becomes even more insidious, as *Pitchfork* contributor Briana Younger notes, as "white artists can assume the pose of 'other' by embracing certain sounds—rap to achieve edginess, R&B to project tenderhearted soul—without necessarily sacrificing privileged positions in pop". This flexibility is not afforded to black artists. The insistence that all black music be considered R&B or rap, no matter how eclectic or experimental, not only limits black artists' exposure to broader audiences, but also

their personal artistic expression.

The truth is, black artists in pop will continue to face pigeonholing and stereotyping, since by definition success in this genre requires appealing to the masses, and being part of a minority puts you at a disadvantage. Regardless, there is a flurry of ambitious young performers ready to take over the music scene in the years to come, aware of the challenges their predecessors have faced and ready to push past the limits of genre.

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Violet

By VARSITY

The freshers' guide to procrastinating your way through a Cambridge degree

Q

I'm a fresher and I'm worried about the Cambridge workload. Is it really as bad as everyone says?

A

First things first: the workload is definitely manageable. It might take some time for you to get used to, but the main thing is to try and stay organised. If the work was impossible, no one would be getting a degree! Even those with horrific time management skills almost always make it through. We all know a procrastinator (if you don't, chances are that it's you!), and yet we're all still here. Ask the older years in your college for advice – they've been in your position and have probably gone through similar problems. You might even get lucky enough to be on the receiving end of some of their old notes!

There may be a week or more where the workload just gets a bit much, whether you've been ill or just hit that Wednesday Cindies a bit too hard, and that's okay. There are a multitude of options – talking to your supervisor, tutor or director of studies, asking a course friend to bail you out with some reading notes, or simply just handing in an essay plan instead and emailing your supervisor to explain that you simply couldn't do the work this week, and have tried your best to get something in. They've seen it all before. They understand that in your first year, and especially first term, you're just trying to settle in, and you won't be expected to ace every essay you write. But one thing is for sure: you will master the art of deadlines (or asking for extensions) – even if it means bashing out an essay after a night of drinking. You got in, so clearly someone who knows all about the course and its demands thinks you'll be just fine. Trust them!



**Got questions?
Get in touch at
violet@varsity.co.uk**

Serena Smith offers valuable advice on how to procrastinate your way through Cambridge

Looking for more ways to put off work? Have a read of my top tips below and get ready to extend those essay deadlines to your heart's content.

Visit your friends' colleges

Keep telling yourself: 'you're at Cambridge, you need to make the most of it and explore as many colleges as possible' to keep the guilt at bay. Bonus points for visiting a friend's college for a formal and sacking off a whole evening and morning's worth of work in exchange for drinking and hanging, respectively.

Become a tourist

What's the phrase? 'If you can't beat them, join them'. Everyone's sick of dodging tourists when you're just trying to get to a supervision, so why not put off work by becoming one of them? Hit up any combination of the local museums

and go for a leisurely walk around King's to guarantee a whole day of wasted time.

Hit the gym

Make the most of your college's facilities by visiting the gym. But be careful not to apply this logic to visiting the college library, obviously.

Hit the river

Want hours of your life to be eaten away? Take up rowing to effectively sign off 90% of your time to shivering in the freezing cold on the river. You'll spend the other 10% talking about the fact that you do rowing.

Read

Nothing relevant to your course, of course. Like this article! There's nothing like the sweet guilt of reading something trivial when you've got a 200-page book left to read for the next day.

Stare at the ceiling wondering how you got in to Cambridge

Nothing better than a huge wallow in impostor syndrome to disrupt even the best-laid plans. Now go back to step 1 and repeat.

The trials and tribulations of student cooking a.k.a contending with the Cambridge gyp

Katey Parker explores the trials of cooking with a microwave and living without an oven

Student life at Cambridge is odd, from the confusing complexities of the college system, to terms so short you question the point of ever leaving home in the first place. But it is the living arrangements, and in particular the cooking facilities available, that truly take the biscuit – no pun intended.

Firstly, you have the option of securing your scan from a wood-panelled hall lined with frowning old men, questioning your decision to get both chips and sautéed potatoes in one sitting. But if you don't fancy being judged by these immortalised academics or eating nosh flavoured solely with salt (if you're lucky enough to get any seasoning at all), your only other option is to muster up a masterpiece in your student kitchen.

Remembering this is Cambridge, this isn't actually a kitchen but is

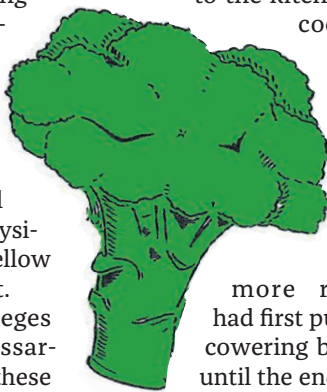
instead often referred to as a 'gyp' for reasons I do not know nor care to ever find out – and there's no guarantee that your gyp is even going to be functional. Got a microwave? Great! Now try and use this contraption to heat up your Alphabetti Spaghetti just as someone else enters wanting to boil the kettle, leaving you to fight over the single available socket. Now imagine doing this in a room more apt to being labelled a cupboard. One step to the right and you'll be making awkward physical contact with your fellow chef. No one wants that.

I have been to colleges with frankly unnecessarily large kitchens, but these pose their own dangers. Ten people sharing one space? The odds on being able to pop in at an ungodly hour to wolf down that craved-for tortellini without being seen are low. It's clear that whatever their arrangement, using kitchens in Cambridge always entails some

form of trial.

I have not been without my own difficulties – I started Cambridge as a meek, uncertain fresher, but as the year went on, my confidence in all areas of life began to spring up. Sadly, my new found confidence got the better of me when it came to the kitchen. My attempt to cook fresh chicken in the microwave ended with me marinating an entire staircase with the scent of burnt electrics and a chicken fillet somehow more raw than when I had first put it in, sending me cowering back to the buttery until the end of term.

Things have improved. Since moving into offsite accommodation for second year, we have been granted the gift of hobs (not ovens though, that would be far too kind). This has inevitably resulted in a lining of charred food constantly coating the worktops, along with



“
Got a microwave?
Great! Now try and use it to heat up your Alphabetti Spaghetti”

◀ **Illustration by
Lois Wright
for Varsity**

“
Glossing over the bout of food poisoning, my new start to student cooking has been a success”

the smashing sounds of cutlery at regular intervals. Yet our new arrangements have brought with them many triumphs. It appears that with this minor improvement to facilities, we may all just manage to survive another year.

So, glossing over what may have been a weak bout of food poisoning three days after arriving back, I would say my new start to student cooking life has been an undeniable success. I have only managed to slice my finger once on a dropped wine glass (meaning I'll be taking mugs to pre-drinks from here on in), burnt just two slices of toast and ruined only a few friendships with the dodgy looks I gave to their 'pasta' concoctions.

But I remain alive and thriving, and that alone is a feat in such a testing environment.

It's when someone comes in from the corridor to tell you the place smells 'insane' that you know you've truly made it in the student kitchen. Believe me, my ego has been continuously swelling ever since. I am, now, literally unstoppable.

Despite British successes, the World Athletic Championship offered a concerning glimpse into the fragile future of athletics



Posy Putnam exposes the decaying future of athletics after the World Athletics Championships in Doha

Two new British World Athletic Champions were forged under the sweltering heat in Qatar last week. Their individual triumphs are a feel-good story, their grins now splashed across national papers. But their moments of glory serve as a stark contrast to the state of athletics as a whole.

In Doha, Qatar, at the 2019 International Association of Athletics Federations (IAAF) World Athletics Championships, Dina Asher-Smith took home gold in the 200 metres, silver in the 100-meters and a silver in the 4×100 metres relay, while Katerina Johnson-Thompson triumphed in the heptathlon.

Both women deserved these moments of global success, having experienced their fair share of athletic hardship – for Asher-Smith, a fifth-place finish in Rio 2016, and Johnson-Thompson, despite a promising London 2012 and junior career, missed major global medals in 2015, 2016 and 2017. However, what should have been a moment to celebrate their achievement fell devastatingly flat.

Watching Johnson-Thompson's post-victory interview, the silence of the crowd was deafening. Empty seats lined the background. Her joy was genuine, and her smile was infectious, but this only served to accentuate the fact that the Khalifa stadium – designed to seat 40,000 spectators – was virtually barren.

The story was the same for Asher-Smith. According to the *Guardian*, fewer than 1,000 people witnessed her 200-metre victory. Her mother claimed she had seen more spectators at a national age-group athletic championship in Bedford. Although thousands

of free tickets were given away, as well as children, much of the crowd was long gone by the late hours of the night when most finals were scheduled. Attendance only averaged 20,000 people over the first eight days of the Championships, despite more impressive turnouts over the first two.

It is true that concessions and compromises must be found if athletics wishes to remain a global sport, reaching a global audience.

Traditionally, World Championships have largely been held in Europe, so it is understandable that, recently, efforts have been made to challenge this. In doing so, local weather and time zones must be considered.

However, what is the point of such concessions – or indeed hosting an athletic championship – if there is no one to watch? Whilst Qatar itself may bolster its global standing, it certainly does not reflect well on the IAAF, the governing federation of athletics associations, or the health of track-and-field as a whole.

This begs the question, why Doha? Both Barcelona and Eugene bid for the 2019 Championships, and yet Doha prevailed, despite its lack of infrastructure and hostile weather conditions. The answer, it seems, is money. Currently, Lamine Diack, President of the IAAF when Doha was awarded the Championships, is being investigated by French courts for corruption and bribe-taking in relation to international athletics, notably

including suggestions of bribes around the choice of Doha. For a sport already mired in doping scandals, and a country already accused of human rights violations in relation to immigrant labour, this does not sit well with athletes or fans.

And yet last week, Lord Coe, President of the IAAF, claimed that “on athlete performance this is the best World Championships we have ever had.” But athletics is a spectator sport. “Athlete performance” may be currently thriving, but without crowd turnouts, how can this momentum continue? A sport tainted by financial corruption, human suffering, low crowd turnout and doping scandals suddenly becomes far less marketable to a new generation.

Despite the brilliance of Asher-Smith and Johnson-Thompson, the sport needs more than a few individual superstars to survive. Indeed, for British Athletics, this was their worst medal haul at a Championships since 2005. Sport needs grassroots participation, and grassroots participation is fuelled by the adrenaline of witnessing these incredible athletic feats. This is not something that can simply be replicated through the screen, es-

pecially when sports must now compete for attention with virtual entertainment and social media.

Furthermore, the lack of crowds points to a more sinister conclusion – athletics is no longer about the athletes. The crowds in Doha provided little support or atmosphere for the competitors, and the weather conditions actually proved dangerous, with several long-distance runners collapsing. And, if the French prosecutors are to be believed, the awarding of the championships to Doha suggests that the very ‘point’ of athletics has now shifted – the athletes and fans are no longer front and centre, but rather a few wealthy individuals, nations and companies who are intent on maximising their own profit.

With question marks hanging over the 2021 Championships in Eugene and its ties to the global conglomerate Nike, as well as continued doping violations and, at home, a lack of international British medals, athletics faces a turning point. In future years, will the crowds – and the integrity of the sport – return, or is this the start of a slow, painful decent into irrelevance?

“The lack of crowds points to a more sinister conclusion – athletics is no longer about the athletes”

▲ Cambridge and Oxford competing in Varsity Athletics (DEVARSHI LODHIA)



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KELSEY KERRIDGE

A race against time: The alarming picture painted by the World Athletics Championships 31



City 12

University 20

CURUFC survive last-minute City surge

Joseph Powell
Sport Reporter

Preparations for the men's rugby Varsity Match are in full swing with the Light Blues prevailing in their latest pre-season hit out against town rivals Cambridge RUFC. In a game defined by resolute defending from the Light Blues and rapid accelerating wing attacks from the townsmen, CURUFC held on in the dying minutes to take the annual Town vs Gown fixture by the narrowest of margins as their opponents were left to rue a missed conversion.

Clinical kicking proved to be the difference on a drizzly Monday night at Grange Road. The Light Blue fly half Chris Bell scored from two conversions and two penalties, while Lawrence Rayner for the Blood and Sand narrowly missed his maiden conversion from 10 yards by inches – a moment that was made more salient by the eventual one-point margin. The first half saw the University, playing east to west, frustrate City defensively whilst also piercing through opposition lines on two occasions early on. First came a forceful run from debutant and former South African international Flip van der Merwe before a tidy pass to Bell for a 9th minute try. Bell converted, and subsequently secured and converted, a penalty to bring the score to double

digits within 18 minutes.

Shortly after, referee Jake Hill brandished the first of the evening's four yellow cards to Light Blue prop Charlie MacCallum, giving City the hope of a fault in what had so far been an impenetrable line. The one man disadvantage was, however, negated by the University's collective fortitude, with their goal-line defence holding strong.

This led to the game's first flash point, with a large group of players coming together, arms aloft, as passions boiled over and exchanges became heated. After spending several minutes regaining control of the game and consulting with the touch judge, referee Hill elected to send both CURUFC's Rowan Beckett and City's Matt Meek to the bin. Again showing no signs of their numerical deficiency, the Light Blues were able to kick to touch before putting together a rapid catch and drive movement from the resultant line out. Hooker Miles Huppertz slammed over the line for another try and subsequent conversion by Bell bringing the score up to 17-0 in favour of the hosts at half time.

Despite being shut out in the first half, City displayed no signs of discouragement after the break. A series of scrums were won confidently, with City gradually gaining favourable field position. City fans thought their duck had been broken when a fumbled pass from a slippery ball saw Miles Bean pounce and get

“CURUFC's win was a much needed boost to their Varsity campaign”

to ground beyond the line, only for the referee to deem the ball had left play beyond the goal line.

Minutes later the Light Blues picked up the fourth and final yellow of the evening, with Tom Walton sent to the sin-bin for a technical offence, before City were finally awarded dividends for the hardy scrum work which defined their evening. Fred Betteridge got the Blood and Sand on the scoreboard in the 54th minute with a missed conversion bringing the game to 17-5.

The Light Blues then opted for fresh legs, bringing on four changes in the pack including former Harlequins second row and Wallabies captain James Horwill. City responded with some silky work from their backline, with George Laing's charged-down kick being grounded for a try by Rayner in the 76th minute. The number 10 then converted his own try with a swift drop kick and brought the score to 20-12 in the 76th minute.

Sensing opportunity amid what had previously felt like consolation, City mounted a series of attacks in the closing minutes, with some solid scrum work leading to another try, this time by Ramaz Rukhadze. This was, however, to be the last action of the game, and relieved Light Blues fans erupted with noise characteristic of both sets of fans throughout the evening, who had come out in strong numbers for another year.

CURUFC's win was a much needed

▲ Cambridge RUFC get the feed against CURUFC on Monday night
(JOSEPH POWELL)

boost to their Varsity campaign, which had previously suffered pre-season losses to Loughborough and Durham. They are next in action again at Grange Road against Welsh Academicals on 12th October, whilst City face Canterbury away on the same afternoon.

Cambridge University: Gatus; Jemphrey, Russell, Mackle, Story; Bell, Gliksten; MacCallum, Huppertz, Miller, van der Merwe, Beckett, Walton, McMahon, Leonard.

Replacements: Schusman, Harbone, Horwill, Hargreaves, Smeaton, Laing, Mullaney, Elms, Lovelace.

City: Patrick; Phoenix, Lewanituva, Simonds, Bean; Rayner, Duffin; Meek, Priestley, Copeland, Hill, Clarke, Dickinson, Dawson, Betteridge.

Replacements: Rukhadze, Rayment, Napier, Marshall, Venni, Traynor, Chivanyge.

▼ Flip van der Merwe (JOSEPH POWELL)

